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Moore, Albert Weston, b.
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The rational basis of
orthodoxy

THE RATIONAL BASIS OF ORTHODOXY

BY

ALBERT WESTON MOORE, D. D.



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DEDICATION

To students in colleges and other educational institutions, and to all thoughtful persons in the pulpit and the pews who are in sympathy with the obvious teachings of the New Testament, but have been misled by the one-sided trend of contemporary thought into suspecting that their religious hopes cannot claim a rational sanction of as high a kind as attaches to secular beliefs, this book is affectionately dedicated.

PREFACE

It is not pretended that the following chapters contain anything like a thorough and exhaustive treatment of the subjects to which they are respectively devoted. It will be sufficiently obvious that the plan of the work permitted me only to compress into a small space a few salient points under each of the heads into which the book is divided. It has been my aim simply to trace in outline the course of reasoning by which, as I am convinced, what is commonly known as evangelical Christianity may be coördinated with other beliefs, scientific or philosophical, which men of education deem themselves justified in confidently adopting. I have also forborne, for the sake of brevity, to discuss some of the dogmas which would naturally be suggested by the title of the book, and have limited myself to the consideration of those which I conceive to be of the first importance. The doctrine of immortality, however, which undoubtedly ranks with these, seems to me to follow so naturally from the resurrection of Christ that a special discussion of it may be properly omitted,

although in a larger work a chapter might be devoted to it.

The first chapter was published a number of years ago, in substantially its present form, in a denominational newspaper, after having been twice read at representative gatherings of ministers or laymen. I received at the time by mail and in other ways so many gratifying assurances that it met the needs of the particular class of minds for which it was written that I have thought best to reproduce it in its entirety, with the exception of some unimportant changes, although it anticipates, in a measure, some positions which are more fully considered later on.

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THE RATIONAL BASIS OF ORTHODOXY

CHAPTER I

THE RATIONALITY OF FAITH

Two characteristic features of modern scientific thought are worthy of special notice. One is its idea of what constitutes proof; the other is the peculiar attitude of mind it requires on the part of all who would use its methods for the advancement of knowledge. The definition of proof which it would seem to have adopted is, "Such a degree of evidence as will necessitate conviction in any intelligent mind." Thus, one of the golden rules of Descartes is,¹ "Give unqualified assent to no propositions but those the truth of which is so clear and distinct that they cannot be doubted." Of the same tenor is Professor Huxley's message to the youthful student of science: "Tell him that it is his duty to doubt until he is compelled by the absolute authority of nature to believe that which is written in books." These quotations will also serve to indicate in what attitude of mind the scientists would have the search for truth con-

¹ T. H. Huxley, *Essays Selected*, etc. (Macmillan & Co., 1871.)

ducted ; as will also Mr. Lecky's observation : " To raise the requisite standard of proof, to inculcate hardness and slowness of belief, is the first task of the inductive reasoner. He looks with favor on the condition of suspended judgment ; he encourages men rather to prolong than to abridge it." And the views set forth in the above excerpts find a logical resultant in an opinion expressed some years ago by a writer in the " Contemporary Review," to the effect that they who have not the time or the ability to investigate have no right to believe.

It is not easy to find fault with either of the positions which science thus occupies. Mathematical reasoning has long been regarded as the ideal method of establishing conclusions because perversity itself cannot call in question its results. The inductive reasoner also points to a body of truth built up by his methods which is almost, if not quite, as far beyond the reach of doubt as a theorem in geometry. He has thus shown that the conception of proof furnished by mathematics is practical as well as ideal, and that it may be realized in other sciences than that of quantity. He knows, too, that every belief which is not strictly necessary must be due, in some degree, to a volition and is consequently, to that extent, an assumption. He is not, therefore, to be censured if he gives the name of proof only to that degree of evidence which makes doubt impossible, if he is inclined to regard as unscientific all convictions which are in any measure voluntary.

But if so much is conceded, if it is admitted that a proposition cannot be regarded as proved, in the highest sense of the word, until assent cannot be withheld from it even by prejudice itself, then the inference is not to be denied that the human mind, while engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, should be characterized by hardness and slowness of belief, that its attitude should be as long as possible one of suspended judgment; for evidence cannot be known to be irresistible until unbelief has given way in a determined effort to resist it. Only when a man is convinced, as it were, in spite of himself, can he feel any well-grounded assurance that his conviction rests on a foundation of genuine proof.

There would be no disposition on the part of the Christian Church to criticise unfavorably these two scientific principles if they were applied only in the pursuit of natural knowledge. But it is impossible, even if it were desirable, to restrict the use of them to particular fields of inquiry. Christianity has a message for students of nature as well as for other men, and its imperative command, "Believe," is sure to evoke from them the retort, "Prove so that we cannot but believe." Nor can science act here only on the defensive and be true to itself. If it is working in the only way in which valid beliefs are to be had, it must and ought to be aggressive. It cannot be faithful to its mission if it does not scrutinize the supports of religious as well as of secular opinion, and insist

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that Christianity itself shall abandon all claim to scientific recognition, or produce in its defense reasons which will establish its truth beyond all question.

And, in meeting such a challenge, it will not be enough for theologians to show that there is, on the whole, a presumption in favor of the truth of their religion, or even that Christianity is probably true. Presumptions and probabilities cannot be received by the man of science as equivalent to proof. They may be well enough in their place, but not until they have developed into certainties which even prejudice cannot rationally deny to be such, will he or can he consistently deem them worthy of unqualified assent and unhesitating confidence.

Now here arise some important inquiries which need to be soberly and candidly considered. Is Christianity susceptible of that degree of proof which is thus demanded? Are its objective evidences, that is, its evidences which are universally available, of so convincing a nature that religious doubt must disappear from every mind by which they are examined without prejudice? Are the stock arguments of our theological schools of such a character that we must deem every man either irrational or insincere who shall fail to be convinced by them? In a word, are we justified in adopting the view of faith set forth by President Hopkins¹ years ago and regarding it merely as an

¹ *Evidences of Christianity*, p. 21.

inevitable result of a candid attention to evidence which to an impartial mind will have all the force of a demonstration?

For my own part I do not hesitate to answer all of these questions in the negative. If the scientists have the right idea of proof, Christianity presents itself to no man at the outset as a religion that is proved. If they have truly described the attitude of mind in which it is to be investigated, it is not likely to be proved.

In support of the first assertion it may be stated that the familiar arguments for the existence of God are incumbered with serious objections. The *a priori* arguments assume without proof that certain mental concepts imply the existence of corresponding objective realities. The argument from causation is open to the criticism that it makes the First Cause itself an effect. The argument from design — the only one which Mr. Mill¹ regarded as of any value whatever — can furnish at the best, according to that writer, only a strong probability, and is weakened, in his opinion, by the possibility that the theory of evolution may be established. Only a few years after he had so expressed himself that theory had come to be regarded as sound by a large part of the thinking world, and there can be little doubt that Mr. Mill, if he had lived, would have reduced accordingly still more his estimate of the evidential value of the argument mentioned. The proof from expe-

¹ *Three Essays on Religion.*

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rience requires time, and can be had, as a rule, only by those who are willing to take for granted at the start that which it is sought to prove.

The evidence for the immortality of the soul, in the opinion of Rev. F. W. Robertson,¹ although valuable in the way of suggestiveness, is yet, apart from revelation, worth nothing in the way of proof; and the doctrine, according to Bishop Butler,² even when the existence of God is conceded, is proved only "to a very considerable degree of probability." Nor do the representatives of the Society for Psychical Research who have published the results of its latest investigations profess to have established the existence of disembodied spirits beyond all controversy. If it becomes in any measure a matter of doubt whether the existence of God can be proved, then it becomes more than ever doubtful whether Hume's celebrated argument against the credibility of the Christian miracles has been answered, inasmuch as the only replies to it now held to be satisfactory take the existence of God for granted. In the belief in God and his miraculous interpositions in the affairs of men is involved the belief in a supernatural revelation and in the resurrection of Christ. If confidence in these truths is shaken, the incarnation and the atonement become, in a proportionate measure, objects of doubt, while the belief in redemption and heaven becomes, to a similar degree,

¹ *Sermons*, "The Doubt of Thomas."

² *Analogy*, chap. i., last paragraph.

clouded with uncertainty. I repeat, therefore, that if science has the only correct idea of proof, Christianity, as commonly defined, is not proved by the objective evidences now adduced in its behalf.

It is not enough to allege that the objections just suggested have been answered, for it is certainly not true that they have been so completely overthrown as to appear indubitably unsound. Neither is it pertinent to maintain that Christianity in its conflicts with its antagonists has gained an advantage over them; for, even if this statement could be trusted, it is not necessarily true that victory in debate means the establishment of the positions defended. If the scientific notion of the proper grounds of belief is correct, then belief in Christianity is unscientific until unbelief is impossible, a condition which cannot be perfectly fulfilled so long as its defenses can be regarded with any degree of well-founded suspicion. And even if it be contended that this condition is never really fulfilled in the conclusions of science itself, yet if the reasoning of the scientists approximates so closely to their ideal of proof as to reduce the voluntary element in their beliefs to a minimum, the assertion just made will stand; for there will still be in the accepted results of science a degree of certainty which no balance of probability alleged to exist on the side of revealed religion is competent to produce.

In defense of the statement that Christianity is

not likely to be proved if it is admitted that truth must always be sought in the attitude of mind already described, let me merely mention a few corollaries which might be deduced from such an admission: The listener in the pew ought to cultivate a spirit of intellectual resistance to the preacher in the desk. Conversion ought seldom, if ever, to follow immediately the hearing of the Word. *Now* is the accepted time not to believe but to investigate. The dying skeptic needs, not exhortations to put his trust in Christ, but copious extracts from works on Christian evidences. Then, too, doubt is often wholesome. It is a safeguard against false opinions, and ought to be encouraged as long as obstinacy itself can keep it alive. Ministers ought not to argue in behalf of the gospel without indicating all that has been or can be said on the other side. The works of able infidels ought to be placed in our Sunday-school libraries and in the rooms of our Young Men's Christian Associations. Every one who has been converted without having learned what objections the skeptics urge against his religion ought to familiarize himself with them at once. He ought to assume a state of suspended judgment, and to believe again only after he has labored faithfully but fruitlessly to doubt. Paine, Renan, and Strauss should share impartially with the Bible his attention. Some disciple of the late Colonel Ingersoll should be invited to labor in conjunction with every revivalist or praying-band. If the truth of Christianity must be established by

argument, there should be fairness in the discussion, and both sides ought to have an impartial hearing. If, as Professor Huxley asserts,¹ there is but one kind of knowledge and but one method of acquiring it, then religion ought to form no exception to his remark that skepticism is the highest of duties, blind faith the one unpardonable sin.

Is it, then, too much to maintain that, if the search for truth can be rationally conducted on no other principles than those which are approved by science, Christianity has not been and is not likely to be proved? Is it too much to assert that its objective evidences are not strong enough to banish all doubt of its truth from every intelligent mind that is resolved to doubt as long as possible? But every one who contends that theology at the outset rests on rational foundations as strong as those of science, and that Christianity ought to be accepted because it can be proved in advance of experience to be true, must submit his reasoning to the scientific tests already named; for, in that case, they are sound. If the intellectual evidences of Christianity are sufficient to demonstrate the truth of it, then they are strong enough to necessitate belief in the most resolutely skeptical mind. If, as President Hopkins² asserted, God "asks no one to believe except on the ground of evidence," then either Christianity is incredible, or else he is

¹ *Lay Sermons*, p. 18. (D. Appleton & Co., 1870.)

² *Evidences of Christianity*, p. 21.

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correct and self-consistent in asserting that the evidence of its truth is as convincing as that for the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid, and, if candidly examined, *must* be believed. But if it is less conclusive than this, then the inference cannot be resisted that faith in Christianity must be to some extent voluntary, and therefore, to the same extent, an assumption.

But now arises the inquiry, if we concede that Christianity cannot be proved — at least at the outset — in the highest sense of the term, do we not make a complete surrender to our enemies? If we admit that intelligent men may honestly fail to be convinced by the ordinary Christian evidences, must we not retreat in confusion from the field of discussion? By no means. If some Christian apologists have made a serious mistake in overrating the rational supports of their religion, those scientists who have attacked their faith have made a graver one in practically forgetting that evidence which is too weak to be called proof may yet be strong enough to justify action. Because the hostile critics are preëminently men of study and reflection, they seem in many cases to have lost sight of the fact that the affairs of practical life must be conducted on principles widely different from those on which scientific knowledge is now pursued.

A mechanic may say, "I believe I can invent a machine that will do a certain work." On what does he ground that conviction? Probably on nothing, at first, more convincing than his

knowledge of his own ingenuity and his recollection of some earlier mechanical successes. It is quite likely that he has as yet no notion whatever of the particular way in which he will carry out his idea. Shall we therefore say to him, "You have no right to your belief; it is an unjustifiable assumption, resting on the scantiest evidence; you ought to distrust such baseless opinions and guard yourself resolutely against the tendency to put confidence in what has not been proved"? Such advice would be equivalent to an admonition to invent no more. He *must* believe that he can do what he is seeking to do, otherwise he will lack the courage to attempt to do it; for twenty years or more may elapse before he can bring his machine to that degree of perfection which will justify him in saying, "My faith in my ability to do what I proposed is justified by evidence which is perfectly conclusive."

A capitalist determines to employ his wealth in building a factory in order to increase his income. He does so because he believes that the undertaking will succeed. But is his belief founded on irresistible evidence? By no means. He has his misgivings and anxieties. He has acquaintances, perhaps, who predict that his scheme will miscarry. Are we then to counsel him to distrust his convictions until he knows that they are sound? That would be virtually to advise him to give up his project altogether, for it is only his faith in the feasibility of it that gives him courage to carry it out.

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Professor Huxley compares the field of scientific investigation to the great ocean which stretches away indefinitely beyond the visible horizon. One cannot but think that the illustration must have suggested to him the method by which the world learned the most important fact that has come to its knowledge in modern times. How did Europe discover that land existed west of the Atlantic Ocean? Not because Columbus maintained an attitude of doubt in reference to the inconclusive arguments which could be cited in support of the fact, but because he believed, on what seemed to the world the most meagre evidence, that India could be reached by sailing westward. Had he cherished the skeptical habits of thought inculcated by modern scientists, he would have viewed his theories with such doubt as must have precluded him from ever risking life and reputation for the sake of testing them.

How do men learn what kind of business they can best succeed in? How does a student ascertain whether he is adapted to a certain profession? How do apprentices determine whether they can become successful mechanics? Not, certainly, by distrusting their own private opinions; not, certainly, by any process of reasoning maintained against cultivated doubts until these disappear of themselves. Otherwise they would starve before they would have confidence enough to learn any vocation whatever. They simply assume that their personal preferences are indicating to them their

proper calling, and then verify their assumption or falsify it, as the case may be, by the experience of subsequent years.

Thus it would appear that convictions which are sought merely to increase knowledge, to gratify curiosity, may be wisely resisted until they are established by indubitable proof, but that those which are requisite as a ground of immediate action may be laudably indulged on the slightest evidence, or perhaps even on none at all. There is such a thing as enterprise, the kernel of which is a willingness to take things for granted. To assume that what is desirable is true, and then to test the assumption by acting as if it were so, is often the only way in which a man can become acquainted with his own powers and give to his life the highest possible success.

If, then, Christianity is to be regarded merely as the best philosophy extant, or as a benevolent endeavor to convey to mankind additional religious information, there is no reason why it should not be thrown into the crucibles of modern thought and tested by the rigid canons of the inductive sciences. And even if it claims to teach chiefly or only for the purpose of influencing human conduct, yet if it demands action simply on the ground that it is already demonstrated by its evidences to be true, it ought to encounter an intellectual resistance and a demand for proof as determined and exacting as are met by any new scientific theory which seeks to be admitted into the category of

established facts. In neither of these cases, I am convinced, can it expect to make head against its opponents.

But if it is presented to men as that which I believe it to be, as a revelation which it is not impossible at the outset to doubt, but which cannot be practically disbelieved without injury to the prospects of immortal souls, then it has at least as good a claim to human confidence as have the convictions which stimulate men to work for a lifetime in particular directions for position or wealth. And, moreover, since it promises to those that shall believe in it additional evidence of its truth in this life and a complete verification of itself in the life to come, it has vindicated its right to be received among the practical working theories of the human race, theories in pursuance of which men of energy and push always deem themselves justified in denying themselves and laboring for an indefinite length of time in the uncertain hope of reaping a harvest in the end.

I conclude, therefore, that the true source of religious confidence is not primarily the objective Christian evidences, but Christian experience obtained through a voluntary trust in the gospel when doubt is possible, or, what is substantially the same thing, by acting in a state of some uncertainty as if the religion were known to be true. In other words, Christianity is offered to the human race, not as a mere contribution to religious knowledge, but chiefly as a body of directions for a moral

crisis, and is therefore to be used like everything else of the same class, that is, it is to be proved by making trial of it. "To be indecisive and reluctant to act," says Mr. Mill,¹ "because we have not evidence of a perfectly conclusive character to act on, is a defect sometimes incident to scientific minds, but which, wherever it exists, renders them unfit for practical emergencies." Nothing, to my mind, could show more plainly than does this admission of a candid thinker the true ground of that conflict between religion and science of which we hear so much to-day. It is a conflict between methods which are adapted to a crisis and those which are not. Human life, in view of its moral conditions, is a practical emergency; the objective evidences of Christianity are not of a perfectly conclusive character; but to lay aside indecision and reluctance and act as if they were so is the one way to become equal to a crisis and to get that firm religious assurance which otherwise will remain inaccessible.

And now, in concluding this chapter, let me observe:—

1. It is not implied in what has just been presented that arguments for Christianity and works on its evidences are useless or of little value. The word *assumption*, which I have used so often, means not belief without evidence, but only belief on evidence which is not demonstrative. It denotes merely the mental act by which we decide that a

¹ *Logic*, 8th ed., p. 417. (Harper & Brothers, 1879.)

proposition is true when there is any ground whatever to suppose that it may not be so. The boy who must leap across a wide stream will naturally search for the narrowest part of it, although he knows that even there he must risk a spring. What are commonly called the proofs of Christianity may serve to make faith easier even though they can never make unbelief impossible. The transfer of a soul from intelligent doubt to religious confidence will always be effected by a leap into the unknown, by an act of voluntary trust in doctrines which can easily be made to appear in some degree uncertain ; but the length of the leap, the difficulty of the trust, may be indefinitely diminished in most minds by the aid of the Christian evidences.

2. This method of obtaining religious certainty is ennobling. It does for man in relation to his spiritual concerns what the uncertainty which overhangs the future does for him in reference to his secular interests, — it stimulates enterprise. No man is likely to make much headway in life who is not willing sometimes to incur the risk of failure and disappointment. No one who will not hazard a step in any direction until he knows in advance just where it will land him has in him any of the essential qualities of the hero. Christianity would have men act in spiritual matters on the same principles which must underlie their conduct if they are to be eminently successful in their temporal concerns, — it would have them push out boldly by faith into the regions of uncertainty, and,

for the sake of moral profit, act as if they knew to be true some things which they as yet only expect to find so. And as no man deserves a fortune who is not willing to risk failure in the pursuit of it, so they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life who practically doubt its reality merely because they can see a possibility that belief in it may not be sound, and who thus show themselves unwilling to cultivate moral enterprise for the sake of a prospective enlargement of their manhood and spiritual destiny.

3. The view just set forth is practical.

It is so, first, in reference to the needs of the hearers of the Word. If Christianity is to be believed only because it can be proved, what right has any man to become a Christian until he sees that it is proved, until he is constrained to believe after having spent in study and investigation the years that will be needed for him to become thoroughly acquainted with all that can be said both for and against it? Since theology must sometimes make use of arguments of an exceedingly abstruse and profound nature, how can it be expected that persons of limited mental capacity can ever understand all of its proofs? How can any generation be justified in adhering very tenaciously to its religious faith when theories which threaten to undermine the intellectual supports of that faith are matters of close and doubtful discussion? Why is it not best for the man of average understanding to remain neutral in the great con-

flict between belief and unbelief until the roar of the great guns has ceased and victory has been decided in favor of one side or the other? Why need Greek and Trojan spend blood and sweat, if the issues over which they fight must after all be settled by the gods who are wrangling over them in remote Olympus? Moreover, how can the gospel demonstrate its truth in the sick chamber to a mind too weary to follow a train of reasoning? Butler's "Analogy" and kindred works are long tracts to read to dying men; nevertheless, they are likely to be too short to remove the doubts of many a man who is well versed in the writings of the modern skeptics. If faith in Christ must be preceded by a demonstration of the truth of Christianity, then we may safely say that it is something which many will be precluded, by sheer lack of time or ability, from ever exercising.

But if the belief enjoined in the gospel is simply a willingness, in cases of doubt, to assume for the sake of moral gain that certain ethically improving and not unreasonable doctrines are true, then it can be exercised at any time and by anybody. It may be as sudden as the choice which sent the blind man to the pool of Siloam, as the determination sometimes is which transfers a boy from his New England home to Texas or Colorado. Any one who has time enough or wit enough to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" is likely to have enough of both to take for granted that the promises of Christ are true in the hope of finding them

so through the test of a subsequent personal experience.

And, again, the view which I am advocating is practical with reference to the needs of preachers also. It is a good deal to expect, especially in these days of depleted theological seminaries, that every young man who enters the ministry will be able to unhorse with the lance of argument every steel-clad champion of unbelief who may appear in the lists against him. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." David would not have slain Goliath had he been satisfied to leave to the giant the choice of weapons. His flesh would surely have been given to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field had he put his trust in the cumbrous armor which Saul would have buckled upon him. The servant of God is likely to fare little better who engages in a purely dialectical combat with some well-read scoffer in the belief that the coat of mail which has been forged for him in the seminary will effectually resist the two-handed swords and the battle-axes of modern infidelity. Every disciple of Christ who is called to preach the gospel ought to feel that he is superior, in some particular, to every possible antagonist, and that he is under no necessity of quitting the field merely because he has not had time to study logic or to become an expert in debate. If the ground of faith is antecedent evidence, then every doubter has good

cause to make to many an earnest preacher of the gospel the remark to which I have previously referred: "You have not the time or the ability to investigate and, therefore, have no right to believe." But if the true source of religious confidence is in the experimental verification of religious truths not antecedently proved, then every genuine evangelist has the right to say to every unbeliever, however learned and able: "A uniform condition of all enterprising action is an assumption not yet demonstrated to be true, and I exhort you to assume, for the sake of your own moral health and growth, that Christianity is true, even though you are not wholly satisfied with its intellectual supports, and to live a life of Christian self-denial and love in the hope of verifying your assumption by so doing."

Philosophical skepticism expresses its latest theological results in the word *agnosticism*, which implies that the fundamental doctrines of religion have not been disproved, but have merely not been proved. The preacher of the gospel has the right to say to any one who holds that position: "Since you cannot show that the words of Christ are false, you cannot prove that anything which contradicts them is true. Then give the benefit of the doubt to that which is the more ennobling. Take for granted that the gospel is divine. Do what every one must do who would reach the fruition of a stimulating hope, — assume, in the absence of proof to the contrary, that the desirable is true, and then act as if it were so."

When Mr. Mill,¹ summing up the results of his inquiries concerning the immortality of the soul, observes, "There is, therefore, no assurance whatever of a life after death on grounds of natural religion, but to any one who feels it conducive either to his satisfaction or to his usefulness to hope for a future state as a possibility there is no hindrance to his indulging that hope," it is not necessary that each youthful prophet, in order to neutralize the effect of that statement in the mind of some parishioner, should try to make bricks without straw, should seek to demonstrate the reality of the future state beyond all possibility of doubt by means of the arguments of his theological professor; it will be a much shorter and more practical process for him to take the great rationalist at his word. He may confidently affirm, what few would have the hardihood to deny, — that it *is* conducive to one's happiness and eminently so to one's usefulness to hope for a future state as a possibility, and he may, therefore, exhort every one who lacks that hope to indulge it, or, what is the same thing, to conduct himself, in all respects, as if it were sound. And so with all the other teachings of Christianity which the agnostic cannot controvert, although he is able, on negative grounds, to withhold from them his assent, — to take for granted that they are true because they have a tendency to ennoble him who believes them, and then to live a life which is appropriate to

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 210. (Henry Holt & Co., 1874.)

them, is practical advice which may properly be given to the most confirmed doubter. And if so much is admitted, then no servant of God, however clumsy in argument and ignorant of secular lore, need be without the sling and pebbles which will put him on terms of equality with the most formidable antagonist.

4. Finally, the view here defended is scriptural. Belief is represented in the Bible as a voluntary act. This fact was so evident to the poet Shelley¹ that he adduced it as a proof that the gospel was not divine. As a volition had, in his opinion, no power to create a belief, one of the fundamental requirements of Christianity seemed to him irrational and absurd. President Hopkins,² taking apparently the same view of faith, was constrained to regard the command, "Believe," as virtually a direction to examine the sources of belief, to study the proofs of Christianity.

But it seems very clear to me that "belief" and its synonyms are employed in the Scriptures in a popular sense and one which is in very general use at the present time. When a merchant trusts an unknown customer, when a speculator has faith in an uncertain enterprise, when a man believes a doubtful story related to him by a stranger, a volition is usually put forth,—the trust, faith, or belief is exercised on evidence that is scientifically insufficient, and it is, therefore, to

¹ Notes to *Queen Mab*.

² *Evidences of Christianity*, pp. 21, 22.

a certain extent, an assumption. The merchant takes for granted that his customer is honest, the speculator takes for granted that his venture will succeed, the man takes for granted that the tale told to him is true. To act, then, as if a certain thing were true which cannot as yet be known to be so is to believe in a popular, and also, as I am persuaded, in the scriptural sense of the word.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews¹ faith is not defined as an involuntary assent to propositions which have been demonstrated to be true; it is "the assurance of" (or "the giving substance to") "things hoped for," "the proving" (or "test") "of things not seen." Ignorance and hope, rather than unwavering certainty, are thus declared to be involved in it.

When Thomas refused to credit the report of the resurrection of Christ without ocular demonstration of its truth, he only demanded the same degree of proof which the other disciples had had; and if belief is the acceptance of only such statements as have been proved, he ought to have been commended as a cautious investigator who would not frame his verdict until all the evidence was in. Yet Christ did not commend him, but by praising those who had acted differently, he virtually censured him. When he said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," he indicated clearly enough that the blessings of

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

Christianity were for those who would have sufficient spiritual ambition to put confidence in things only hoped for and to test by a voluntary faith desirable things not seen, rather than for those who would withhold credence from every stimulating doctrine until an irresistible logic should deprive them of the natural power to doubt, and their faith, at the same time, of all ennobling influence. There is little or nothing morally invigorating in an act of belief which is necessitated by overpowering evidence ; but to believe for a praiseworthy end when doubt is easy is to elevate the soul by an act of moral heroism.

When Jesus said,¹ " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes," he taught that the avenue to religious knowledge leads not from the reasoning powers, but from the childlike disposition to take things for granted, to receive things on trust. And as Abraham in hope believed *against* hope, and as he went out not *knowing* whither he went, so every heir of salvation is called upon to put confidence in things not known by him to be true and against which much that is discouraging may be said.

If the above considerations could leave any doubt in any mind as to the rationality of the faith which the Scriptures enjoin, that doubt must disappear when it transpires that the mental process

¹ Matt. xi. 25.

involved, when broadly considered, is really not even unscientific, and that it is essentially indistinguishable from that which is carried on in almost any extensive induction. The first step in the search for scientific truth is usually an hypothesis, a supposition made either without evidence or on evidence avowedly meagre, in order to facilitate the drawing of right conclusions. By suggesting observations and experiments it puts the investigator on the road to satisfactory evidence. Without assumptions of this kind science could never have attained its present state. They are necessary steps in the progress to something more certain. Thus, according to Mr. Mill, from whose "Logic" ¹ I have quoted substantially these last observations, the hypothesis is an unproved assumption which is made in the hope of verifying it through later *mental* action. Now Christianity may be safely defined as an hypothesis to be adopted with the expectation of establishing it through subsequent *moral* action. The observation and experiments by which the hypotheses of science are tested have their parallel in the obedience to Christ and the resulting Christian experience through which Christian faith must be justified.

This method is identical with that described in the fourth chapter, by which a knowledge of God may be inductively attained. To accept provisionally the New Testament teachings concerning

¹ Chap. xiv. §§ 4, 5.

Christ for the purpose of testing by obedience their adaptedness to the highest conceivable ends of human existence is surely legitimate and rational. Evolution itself, although accepted by so many scientific men, is grounded still, to some extent, on faith. When Haeckel ¹ says, of course, it "cannot be proved exactly," and adds, "Looking forward to the twentieth century, I am convinced that it will universally accept our theory of descent," it is very plain that he regards the complete demonstration of his theory as something that is yet below the horizon. If the Christian regards his faith, not as a substitute for scientific knowledge, but as a means of obtaining this along religious lines, he is in harmony with the scientific spirit. He need not even demur to Professor Huxley's dictum already quoted, "There is but one kind of knowledge and but one method of acquiring it," save in so far as that method involves an unsympathetic attitude towards a philanthropic movement. In other words, Christianity may be defined either as a faith or as a science. In the former case, it makes no claim for scientific recognition, but is to be classed with the unproved assumptions that underlie all practical life. In the latter case, as will be more fully shown hereafter, every Christian is progressively vindicating by his religious experience its right, so far as he is concerned, to be received as a scientific fact. Investigators in other fields may have no sympathy with

¹ *Last Link*, pp. 77, 78. (Adam & Charles Black, 1898.)

his spiritual ambitions and may question the evidential value of his experiences; but that he is seeking for truth and seeking for it in a rational way, they cannot deny.

It will be my purpose in the following chapters to show that the stream which faith must leap is not too wide, or, in other words, that the assumption with which the Christian starts involves no unnatural break with current knowledge, that the unknown element in it does not place it outside the sphere of probability. And while I deem it neither possible nor desirable to demonstrate the truth of Christianity without the aid of a personal Christian experience, I shall hope to be able to show that Christian faith, even when it is so enlarged as to include the essential tenets of modern orthodoxy, is not only rational but also deserves at least the respect of even scientific men.

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION AND THEISM

It would be very difficult to convey an adequate idea of the extent to which the theory of evolution has influenced the thought of our time. Not much more than a generation has elapsed since Darwin published his most celebrated book, but it would not be easy to exaggerate the transformation it has wrought in fundamental conceptions and methods of study in almost every branch of human knowledge. It signalized the dawn of an epoch which was to divide, more sharply than almost any other that can be named has divided, the opinions of men into the old and the new. The *émigré* who returned to France after the Revolution had spent its force could hardly have been more bewildered by the political and social changes which had taken place in his absence than a scholar would be who had lived apart from the intellectual movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century, and should now seek to recognize in the opinions with which modern thought is saturated those that were commonly accepted in his own day. He would speedily realize that the changes which have occurred during this short

time in almost the whole system of human beliefs well deserve to be called revolutionary.

That there are important and even serious disagreements between the author of "The Origin of Species" and some of the acute and able men who are called his disciples cannot be denied. Wallace,¹ who shares with him the honor of the original discovery, accords to sexual selection, on which Darwin laid so much stress, a relatively low place among evolutionary forces. It assumes, in his opinion, too high a development of æsthetic taste in relatively low organisms to explain, for example, the beauty of the peacock's train as the result of a discrimination on the part of the female birds which caused them to choose their mates on account of minute differences in the forms, colors, and patterns of their plumes. He is obliged, therefore, to enlarge the original hypothesis by introducing new agencies to account for the very important class of facts just suggested.

Nor does he² attribute the mental and moral development of the human race exclusively or even primarily to the Darwinian law. The theory that no function or quality can be evolved or even survive in any organism unless it proves advantageous to its possessor in the struggle for existence is rudely jostled, as he conceives, by such phenomena as the capacity to form ideal conceptions of space and time, intense artistic feelings of pleasure in

¹ *Darwinism*, p. 294. (Macmillan & Co., 1889.)

² *Contributions, to the Theory of Natural Selection*, p. 351. (Macmillan & Co., 1870.)

form and color and, I suppose, abnormal self-denial or moral heroism. These have not only not tended to aid in the battle of life those who had them, but the qualities last named have had only too often precisely the opposite effect.

Dr. Romanes, who has been called "almost the most prominent of Darwin's successors," has supplemented the theory of his distinguished leader by that of physical selection, that is, of "the occurrence, accidentally or from unknown causes, of reproductive changes which render certain individuals of a species infertile with others." "This is really an inversion of Darwinism" (Dawson).¹ Both he and Wallace claim to be orthodox Darwinians, yet each accuses the other of heresy.

But a far more serious divergence of view took place when Weismann denied that acquired characteristics are inherited. It had been taken for granted previously by Darwin and most of his followers, not only that a variation which had proved useful to an organism would receive advantageous increments in the struggle for existence, but that these would also be likely to be transmitted to some of its descendants, and, in this way, to be perpetuated and indefinitely improved. But when Weismann affirmed that there was not to be found a single unquestionable case of the transmission of acquired peculiarities to offspring, and that natural selection must be defended without the aid of the assumption which he had thus negatived, it is evi-

¹ *Johnson's Encyclopædia*, 1897, art. "Evolution."

dent that he laid down a proposition of no ordinary importance. Herbert Spencer declared that its acceptance must prove fatal to the theory which it supplemented. And Haeckel¹ says: "I agree with Spencer in the conviction that progressive heredity is an indispensable factor in every true monistic theory of evolution, and that it is one of the most important elements. If one denies with Weismann the heredity of acquired characters, then it becomes necessary to have recourse to purely mystical qualities of germ plasm. I am of the opinion of Spencer, that, in that case, it would be better to accept a mysterious creation of all the various species as described in the Mosaic account." Although the Weismannian theory of descent is probably to be considered as overthrown, yet according to Romanes² (1895), the question as to the transmission of acquired characteristics is still open, and must be settled by further observation and the collation of additional facts.

It would thus appear that the theory of evolution has itself been developing in harmony with its own principles. It has branched out already into several species, into a number of different hypotheses, each one of which is associated with some prominent name or names. Wallace, Darwin, Mivart, Romanes, Weismann, and others, represent so many more or less divergent conceptions of the influence to be ascribed to natural

¹ *Last Link*, p. 276.

² *Darwin and after Darwin*, p. 41. (Open Court Pub. Co., 1894.)

selection, among which a veritable struggle for existence is going on with the not improbable result that all of them will be largely modified, if some of them do not disappear altogether.

But the theory itself, nevertheless, is doubtless to be reckoned among the permanent acquisitions of human thought. Although there are important residuary phenomena which have not as yet been brought into full harmony with it, although some of its leading advocates hold wide differences of opinion as to the validity of some of its postulates, although it is constrained to fill up gaps in its defenses with assumptions and guesses in anticipation of further discoveries, it seems to have been accepted by a large majority of intelligent men as at least probably true, even though they may not claim that it has been scientifically established. According to Haeckel,¹ "We are justified in affirming that the descent of man from an extinct tertiary series of Primates is not a vague hypothesis but an historical fact." And again,² "Looking forward to the twentieth century, I am convinced that it will universally accept our theory of descent, and that future science will regard it as the greatest advance made in our time." And John Fiske³ writes regarding man's descent from prior animal forms: "There is no more reason for supposing that this conclusion will ever be gainsaid than for supposing that the Copernican astronomy will some

¹ *Last Link*, p. 76.

² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³ *Destiny of Man*, p. 20. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1887.)

time be overthrown, and the concentric spheres of Dante's heaven be reinstated in the minds of men."

Whether the influence or agency suggested by the phrases "natural selection," "struggle for existence," "survival of the fittest," etc., will ever be unquestioningly received as accounting for all the phenomena of organic and mental development may well be doubted. As has been shown already, it is not so received by some of the most prominent evolutionists at the present time. When such a man as Haeckel admits that complete proof of it has not yet been obtained, and pleads for the adoption of the theory on the ground that there is no other that can be opposed so effectively to the theory of special creations, it certainly does not appear that the supports of the original hypothesis have all the strength that some might desire.

Still, the theory of evolution, when broadly defined and considered in its largest outlines, has secured a tenacious hold on the human mind. As has been the case with most ideas that have obtained a large following in a brief space of time, a place seems to have been previously prepared for it into which it was recognized as aptly fitting. As the Reformation spread with unexampled rapidity because Luther expressed distinctly what was already vaguely existent in many minds, so Darwin and Wallace owe the quick popularity which their theory achieved to the fact that it

explained and generalized to many a mind its own detached observations and surmises. Chemical solutions are sometimes so near to the point of crystallization that only the introduction of a crystal of the right kind is needed in order to precipitate the process. So the human mind had doubtless been prepared by previous questionings and an acquaintance with many isolated phenomena for some fact or plausible theory which would combine at once its disconnected fragments of knowledge into a self-consistent and intelligible whole. The reason given by a character in a recent famous novel for accepting Darwinism, "It accounts for things, you know,"¹ suggests a peculiar attractiveness that inheres in the theory, and explains, no doubt, much of the readiness with which it has been accepted by a large part of the thinking world.

But however this may be, the theory itself has been influencing, modifying, and training human thought now for more than a generation. It has been accustoming human minds to think along the lines marked out by it. And in these facts lies a special promise of its continuance. It may be safely taken for granted that the philosophy, the educational methods, the practical philanthropy of the future will be shaped by a recognition of development as the keynote of all progress. A definite direction has been given to human thought by Darwin and his compeers which has become,

¹ *Trilby*.

as it were, a second nature. It will be not merely customary but natural and easy for men, in time to come, as indeed it already is in our own day, to investigate and explain all social, political, and other movements in the light of and in harmony with the fundamental facts of evolution.

That the new theory would antagonize many previous religious and theological conceptions was to be expected. The human mind is, in a certain general sense, consistent with itself; that is, its customary modes of thought in one sphere of knowledge will be likely to be followed in every other with which it has to do. It will carry its own individuality with it everywhere. A revolution of ideas which is radical enough to establish development as the governing principle in one class of phenomena must extend to every other. The new movement has made itself felt in the province of natural religion. It has influenced the higher criticism of the Christian Scriptures. It has profoundly modified the interpretation of the Biblical histories. The results are largely such as must be produced by the investigations of men who have come under the influence of a new point of view. The mental character of these men has been changed, and their opinions and conclusions along the lines referred to have been correspondingly affected.

That the theory in question is in serious conflict with any intelligent form of Christianity is not now generally apprehended. That it is practically

independent of the processes by which religious convictions are gained and theological creeds are adopted has been fully demonstrated. It did not prevent Romanes from returning to the faith of his early manhood; it did not keep Wallace from becoming a spiritist. A modification of it was held by Mivart without apparently weakening for a quarter of a century his confidence in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. And there are few, if any, greater names than these among the adherents and defenders of the new philosophy. Moreover, it is accepted, without any resulting loss of religious enthusiasm, by many of the most prominent theologians and preachers of the Christian Church.

Nor is it inconsistent with the most obvious teachings of the Bible in regard to the origin of animate creation and the development of the human species. On the contrary, the Book of Genesis, it would seem, ought to have suggested long ago some of the principles on which Darwin lays so much stress. Without attaching undue importance to the so-called Mosaic account of the creation, or citing from it anything more than the undeniable fact that, so far as it goes, it clearly recognizes the successive appearance of organic types on the earth in an ascending series, it is quite obvious that the primitive man whom it describes belongs to a very low order of being.

Professor Huxley attacked the Biblical cosmogony through the Miltonic paraphrase of it in

“Paradise Lost,” very much as it has been and in some countries may still be the custom to evade the political postulate that the king can do no wrong by denouncing his acts as those of his chief advisers. The learned palæontologist, however, was at no pains to conceal the fact that he regarded the two accounts as substantially the same. But that Milton’s picture of Adam, with his highly developed moral and intellectual nature, has anything in common with the First Man of the Bible, whose rudimentary conscience failed to secure from him obedience to a command which was suited to the moral development of an infant, and whose knowledge of art was not seemingly equal to the task of making his own clothing, would hardly have become a common belief but for the influence of the great poet combined with that of certain theological tenets which are supposed to depend on such a belief. It is not impossible, also, that interpretation here may have been biased by survivals of the old Pagan tendency to date the golden age of human existence at the beginning of human history.

And the progress of the race, as it is depicted in the same book, is in harmony with the Darwinian theory. Its efficient cause is what may be called divine selection, which, to a people who knew no distinction between the works of God and those of nature, was but another name for natural selection. Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are successively separated from other mem-

bers of their families or from their fellow-men on the ground, apparently, of certain advantageous or desirable qualities which fitted them to become, each in turn, the founders of a higher race. And the later books abundantly recognize the same principle. The deportation of the Jews to Babylon was a veritable cataclysm, which extinguished politically and nationally all save those who retained seventy years afterwards so much of loyalty to their ancestral religion as made them equal to the sacrifice and self-denial which were needed for its reinstatement at Jerusalem. The final disappearance of idolatry from among this people, which was coincident with this event, is as pronounced an example of the elimination of the unfit by natural selection as can be found in history.

And there is evidently no necessary antagonism between this theory and the gospel, which likens the kingdom of heaven to the smallest of the seeds, out of which is to grow the great tree which will shelter the birds of the air in its branches.

That the theory can work no harm to the church seems thus to be very clear ; but is this negative commendation the best that can be accorded to it ? It would be strange indeed if this interrogatory must be answered affirmatively. The uniform effect of previous discoveries of philosophical or scientific truth has been to shed light on the teachings of the Bible and so to increase the credibility of the Christian revelation ; and we are, therefore, the better prepared to believe that the theory of

evolution can be made to yield material support to the cause of theism and to Christian apologetics in general.

Perhaps the most formidable obstacle which the teacher of evolution has to encounter, if we omit the unwillingness of most men to acknowledge relationship with the monkeys, is what seems, at first glance, the obtrusive incredibility of his theory. It demands assent to propositions which the human mind, at the outset, cannot but regard as monstrously improbable. It would have us believe that a microscopic speck of vitalized matter, originating we know not how, but, as is assumed by some, from the action of forces which render it a product of mere inert matter, devoid of organism and mental functions, as insignificant, to all outward appearance, as a grain of dust, may nevertheless contain potentially highly differentiated living forms without number, vast intelligences which are to solve the profoundest mysteries of nature, the germs of future sciences, philosophies, and inventions.

The tragedies of a Shakespeare, the campaigns of a Napoleon, the statesmanship of a Bismarck, the symphonies of a Beethoven, the pictures of a Raphael, the philanthropy of a Clara Barton, are all supposed to have had a rudimentary existence in some living but helpless atom, and to have needed for their production only time and the persistent action of unintelligent forces. I well remember laying down, many years ago, a copy of Spencer's

“Biology” in order to run to a fire; and I am not likely ever to forget the mental shock I experienced when the ideas which I had imbibed from that work came into sudden collision with the manifestations of practical and energetic life in the midst of which I soon found myself. As I passed a fire-engine which was noisily belching out smoke and sparks, while it flung, with impressive power, tons of water into the upper stories of a burning factory, I tried to persuade myself that the machine existed in some rudimentary phase ages ago in some almost invisible dot of bioplasm; and if I did not exclaim, “Credat Judæus!” it was because I did not express in words the emotions I felt at the moment. The leap, when thus baldly exhibited, is too long for the human reason to take, and the successive steps by which it is sought to narrow the logical chasm are so numerous, they are so largely devoid of real proof, and so many of them are missing, that it is safe to say that without some cogent facts of sufficient force to remove this obstacle, Darwin’s theory would have found it hard to sustain itself very far above the level of a philosophical curiosity.

But the evolutionist is not insensible to the difficulty described, and believes that he has surmounted it. So far is it from being incredible, in his estimation, that such a process of development as has just been outlined should have taken place, he maintains that a parallel one reaches its climax in the birth of every human being. He

contends that the transformation of a minute, embryonic cell, during the space of a few months, into a living babe which has within itself latent capacities that a few years will ripen into intellectual faculties of perhaps the highest order, would be antecedently as improbable as his theory of the descent of man. He claims, moreover, that the history of every organism before it begins an independent existence summarizes the previous history of the species to which it belongs. "This fundamental law, to which we shall recur again, and on the recognition of which depends the thorough understanding of the history of evolution, is briefly expressed in the proposition that the history of the germ is an epitome of the history of the descent, or, in other words, that ontogeny is a recapitulation of phylogeny, or, somewhat more explicitly, that the series of forms through which the individual organism passes during its progress from the egg-cell to the fully developed state is the brief, compressed reproduction of the long series of forms through which the animal ancestors of that organism (or the ancestral forms of its species) have passed from the earliest periods of so-called organic creation down to the present time" (Haeckel).¹

The evolutionist sees no explanation of the seemingly aimless divergences of the embryo from what would appear to be a normal course of development save in the hypothesis that it is pursuing

¹ *Evolution of Man*, i. 6. (C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879.)

the zigzag trail along which the parent organism has been evolved by age-long processes. That embryonic spiders should develop legs which disappear before birth, that foetal whales are provided with teeth which are wanting in the adult animal, that embryonic reptiles, birds, and mammals should have gills resembling those of fishes and that the gill arches should afterwards close up, that the human foetus should have a tail supported by eight bones, five of which cease to exist before it is born, besides numberless other cases in which wholly useless organs appear before birth only to be withdrawn before the independent life begins in which, if at any time, they might prove of utility, he believes to be inexplicable except on the theory which has just been named. He deems it irrelevant to urge sentimental objections to the theory that the human race has sprung from lower animal types or even rational objections which are grounded in the alleged improbability of such a process, when the fact is incontestable that every new-born child has just completed a rapid ascent from the lowest to the highest form of organic being.

This argument from embryology is essential to the theory of evolution. It cannot be spared. According to Romanes,¹ "The science of embryology affords perhaps the strongest of all the strong arguments in favor of evolution." "The leading facts in embryology, which are second to

¹ *Scientific Evidences of Organic Evolution*, pp. 63, 64. (Macmillan & Co., 1882.)

none in importance," says Darwin.¹ "Ontogeny," writes Haeckel,² "is of the most inestimable value for the knowledge of the earliest palæontological conditions of development, just because no petrified remains of the most ancient conditions of the development of tribes and classes have been preserved. These, indeed, could not have been preserved, on account of the soft and tender nature of their bodies. No petrifications could inform us of the fundamental and important fact which ontogeny reveals to us, that the more ancient common ancestors of all the different animal and vegetable species were quite simple cells like the egg-cell. No petrification could prove to us the immensely important fact established by ontogeny that the simple increase, the formation of cell aggregates, and the differentiation of these cells, produced the infinitely manifold forms of multicellular organisms. Thus ontogeny helps us over many and large gaps in palæontology." In view of these high estimates of its evidential value, which are of the nature of expert testimony on the subject, it is clear that the facts of embryology cannot be dispensed with by those who seek to prove the theory of evolution.

It may be admitted that the discovery of this analogy or, rather, this parallel case, neutralizes, if it is fairly used, the alleged incredibility of the evolutionary process ; but as it is commonly employed,

¹ *Origin of Species*, p. 396. (Murray, 1872.)

² *History of Creation*, ii. 3. (D. Appleton & Co., 1876.)

it is not logically competent to produce that result. It has no value as an argument unless it is allowed to import into the discussion an inference of the first magnitude which is inseparable from it.

For it must be borne in mind that every germ which has the power to develop into a living organism possesses it through a vital and indispensable connection with an individual representing as high a type of life as that which the germ itself ultimately attains. The fœtus of the mammal has been maturing for months within the body of its mother. The egg of a fowl has had a similar history, and has, in consequence, reached such a stage of cellular development that it may be hatched, even by artificial heat, into a miniature of the parent bird. The seed of a plant has become capable of producing other plants of a certain kind because its whole structure has been derived from a particular plant of that kind in which it grew. The history of every ripening germ and maturing embryo is that of a progressive approach on the part of a rudimentary type of life to a higher type by which it is somehow being shaped, and which it will ultimately resemble. Enshrined in every parent organism there is something which the embryologist can neither describe nor understand, and which, for lack of a better name, may be called an archetypal idea, or a set of correlated vital forces, or a collocation of incomprehensible gemmules. This communicates itself to an almost invisible germ, which it develops through various

eccentric meanderings of growth into a likeness to the parent animal or plant. At the outset there may be no similarity whatever in structure or in faculty between the embryo and the containing organism. The formative influence may seem, in some cases, to have lost control of the wayward offspring. A coralline attached to a rock produces a host of huge floating jelly-fish; these emit eggs which hatch into swimming organisms; these fall to the bottom, where they fasten themselves, and develop at last into corallines. Through all these protean changes the mysterious shaping principle retains its hold upon its material and brings it in the end with infallible precision to its goal. If the various organs and parts are transmitted in the form of atomic gemmules, these cannot be so related to one another as to constitute any likeness whatever to the adult organism into which they are to grow. They will proceed to form one of an altogether different type, which in turn will be exchanged for another of a wholly diverse character. Like the magician in the Arabian tale, the foetus will take on, in rapid succession, forms the most unlike. In the higher orders of the animal kingdom it will become in turn a fish, an amphibian, a lower and then a higher mammal. But all the while there is a definite form which is not lost sight of, and towards which the maturing organism is being unerringly led. No "purely mystical qualities of germ plasm" can be more mystical or less explicable than the property resident in the

primitive ovum by which such vast changes can be wrought without defeating the expected result. There is not so much resemblance between the recondite agencies which transform the incipient into the mature animal as there is between the apron of a loom and the figure in the stuff woven by it.

Now, it is obviously beside the mark to argue that because a low organic type may be evolved under such circumstances into the very highest, a similar process has taken place on an infinitely larger scale where such circumstances did not exist. There is no parity of reasoning in contending that because a vital germ has developed by virtue of its derivation from and its union with a relatively high organic and intellectual being into an infant Paul or Shakespeare, therefore it is rational to believe that a sack of bioplasm wholly unconnected with any higher type of life, owing no part of its growth to any preëxistent organism, receiving shape and mental traits from no being of a higher order, has been evolved into the race to which Shakespeare and Paul belonged. There is no close analogy between what I may call dependent and independent evolution, between the development of a life through force exerted by another life and the development of a germ into a race apart from any such connection.

If, as Haeckel¹ says, ontogeny, *i. e.*, foetal development, "is a short and quick repetition or

¹ *History of Creation*, ii. 53.

recapitulation of phylogeny," *i. e.*, development of the species, why not admit that there must be in the phylogenetic process something that corresponds to that influence of the parent organism which is indispensable to ontogenetic growth? If it is true, as the same high authority contends,¹ that "as every animal and every plant, from the beginning of its individual existence, passes through a series of different forms, it indicates in rapid succession and in general outlines the long and slowly changing states of form which its progenitors have passed through from the most ancient times," why does not the fact that the individual made all its progress by virtue of its connection with a preëxistent life — which was, until almost the end, of an immeasurably higher type than its own — necessitate the inference and even demonstrate the conclusion that the development of the human race as a whole is also due to the constant presence and efficient agency of a higher Being into whose likeness the race is being slowly but surely fashioned? Ought we to believe that a granule of bioplasm has not only come into existence through the operation of forces which belong to inanimate matter and therefore to a lower order of being than its own, but also, as an effect of forces of a similar character, has obtained the power to propagate itself and transmit to its offspring whatever structural gains it has made as a result of its contact with inert matter, to inaugurate, in this manner,

¹ *History of Creation*, p. 33.

a succession of reproductive forms which have inherited a similar power of transmission, and to eventuate in a race endowed with physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities of a relatively infinite largeness, — ought we to believe this when what is held to be perhaps the strongest evidence of the theory is an induction marred by not a single exception which proves, if the so-called “method of Agreement” can prove anything, that no life is ever produced except through the agency of another life of at first a higher order than its own, — ought we to believe it unless we also accept the most obvious corollary which that induction suggests, namely, that the parallelism between the lower and the higher process is complete, and that the human race itself is the climax of a development which is due to the presence and active influence of a Being of a higher order than itself?

It is not “logical,” says Dawson, “to allege the evolution taking place under special conditions of parental origin, incubation, etc., to prove the possibility of evolution in regard to which all these preparatory conditions and efficient causes are absent.” But the allegation may be made logical by completing the analogy. The ontogenetic parallel may be saved by a self-consistent interpretation of the phylogenetic process. What is needed is not the excision of a worthless argument, but the recognition of a conclusion to which the argument distinctly points.

It would seem, then, from what has been ad-

duced, that the evolutionist must either relinquish this analogy, and so leave his theory without its most important buttress, or else assume a closer resemblance between the growth of an embryo and the evolution of a species than he is as yet, as a rule, forward to admit. It will be necessary for him to get along without the supposed parallel case of embryonic development, or to acknowledge that evolution is carried on through forces imparted by a Being higher than the highest race ~~that~~ is being evolved. In the one case, his theory loses much of its credibility through the loss of its strongest support; in the other, it becomes the handmaid of theism. If he claims to have the right to read in the successive changes that take place in the human embryo the history of the descent of man, he must be self-consistent in his use of his illustration. He must not mutilate it. He must not cut it in halves. If it has any important bearing on his subject, if it proves or tends to prove anything whatever, the argument involved in it is this: the successive stages of the development of an individual before birth epitomize those which have occurred in the evolution of the species, and as the former took place and were made possible by the influence of a higher form of life, so the latter presuppose the existence and creative activity of a higher than the highest species which is being produced.

In a word, he must complete his analogy or give it up. He must believe, if he retains it, that back

of the long process of evolution, back of the laws which govern it, there is something, though on a scale inconceivably vast, which corresponds to the archetypal life that resides unseen in every organism and that gradually shapes into likeness to itself embryonic forms which, at first, have no resemblance to it. He must believe that the various organisms lower than man are not the product of blind and random forces, but are the result of prior ideals or models, which are using the forces of nature in order to clothe themselves in visible forms, and which may, perhaps, find some explanation in what Tennyson called the "imagination of God." He is constrained, in fine, if he would not sacrifice an indispensable analogy, to concede that the maternal side of embryonic development has its counterpart also in the evolutionary process, and that there is a Being, higher than man, through whose influence the crowning type of terrestrial life is being elevated into an ever-increasing resemblance to a rational and moral archetype.

The foregoing considerations are well calculated to remove all atheistic implications from the doctrine of evolution. So far is it from antagonizing an intelligent belief in a Supreme Being, it actually furnishes a new proof of his existence. The phylogenetic argument, as the one above given may be called, ranges evolution distinctly on the side of theism. If the new philosophy begins with an attack on the argument from design, it must apparently end by recognizing, in conformity to its

analogies, all that is essential in that argument. It has strengthened, by an apparently necessary deduction from a generally accepted theory, what had already been regarded by some as a precarious induction from possibly misinterpreted facts. And this deduction it is under bonds to defend, because it cannot omit to do so without destroying the logical pertinence of perhaps its strongest proof.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHICAL BACKGROUND OF NATURE

THE materialistic philosophy does not necessarily deny that there is a First Cause of all natural phenomena. Herbert Spencer does not teach that the sequence of cause and effect is a chain which hangs by no highest link. The evolutionist who believes that certain forces have been and are producing, by a continuous process, all the results which collectively make up what we call nature is not unwilling to admit that there was an initial impetus, a starting-point, an original cause from which all subsequent causation has been derived. But there are those who contend that nothing whatever can be known of this primordial source of phenomena beyond the fact of its existence. They contend that to make it a subject of scientific or philosophical inquiry is idle, that the human reason is not competent to determine its nature or attributes. Mr. Huxley, no doubt, would have found a place for all speculations on this subject, or at least for all practical rules of conduct derived from them, in his famous category of "lunar politics."

Mr. Spencer¹ states that there are but three

¹ *First Principles*, p. 30. (D. Appleton & Co., 1875.)

ways of accounting for the present system of things, namely, that the universe is either self-existent, self-created, or created by an external power; and he proceeds to show that all of these theories are untenable, that there is no one of them which does not involve self-contradictions. He concludes, therefore, that "if religion and science are to be reconciled, the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts, that the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." But, as Mr. Martineau¹ has pointed out, "we are told [by Mr. Spencer] in one breath that this being must be in every sense 'perfect, complete, total' — including in itself all power and transcending all law — and, in another, that this perfect and omnipotent one is totally incapable of revealing any one of the infinite store of attributes." Thus, "you deny the Absolute in the very act of affirming it, for in debarring the First Cause from self-revelation you impose a limit on its nature."

Moreover, the very fact that Mr. Spencer characterizes the Absolute as the First Cause involves a contradiction. Cause is a relative term. It necessarily implies an effect. A cause which produces no effect is unthinkable. To affirm that the Absolute is a cause is to suggest that intellectual paradox, an absolute that has a relation. As the existence of this First Cause is supposed to be necessary in order to account for the power that is

¹ *Essays*, pp. 190, 191. (William V. Spencer, 1866.)

manifested in the world, the manifestations of that power are effects of the so-called Absolute. We are compelled by the natural workings of the human reason to draw certain inferences from these effects, certain conclusions regarding the character of the original Cause. To tell us that this is absolute and unknowable will not discourage us from doing so. We are dealing with facts, not with words. The same irresistible laws of mental action which constrain us to admit that there is a First Cause are equally potent in convincing us that we can know something about it. If Matthew Arnold is right in affirming that there is in the world a power that makes for righteousness, it is logically impossible for us not to believe that some of the relations of that power to ethical conduct are discoverable. And so effects which are traceable to an absolute cause oblige us to draw conclusions with regard to its character, even if we are assured that we have no right to hold them. It is recognized that *a priori* and *a posteriori* reasoning are not of equal strength, and that when their respective conclusions are in conflict, it is the former that must give way. An intellectual necessity must override a mere philosophical conceit.

It is hard to avoid the suspicion that men who involve themselves in such hopeless contradictions as are indicated above simply show by so doing that they have exceeded the limits of philosophical inquiry, — that they have waded out into the ocean

of truth beyond their depth. It is much easier to believe that the human mind is not profound enough to grasp transcendental facts than it is to believe that the First Cause is an entity which can only be described in terms which flatly contradict one another. It must be that whoever holds such a belief as that last named mistakes mental confusion for logical proof, and utter bewilderment for rational conviction. We are reminded of Mr. Mill's remark made in a different connection: "The doctrine . . . is so contrary to common sense, that a person must have made some advances in philosophy to believe it."¹

The researches of the practical religionist are not to be barred by antinomies. It is said that a spider's web at the entrance of a cave was proof enough to the pursuers of Mohammed that he was not within; but no fine-spun theories as to the utter inscrutability of the power which the universe manifests can prevent him who is seeking for the Being whom he should thank for the blessings of life from following effects up to their primordial cause and so deducing character from conduct. Alexanders do not stop to untie Gordian knots. They know of a quicker way to universal dominion. The logical snarls by which some thinkers who have overthought themselves would bind the chariots of faith cannot be permitted to delay the progress of him who is ambitious to find the Author of his being, but they must be cleft asunder by the sharp sword of common sense.

¹ *Logic*, p. 188.

It is very manifest that if the extreme agnostic position of Mr. Spencer can be maintained, religion, in any very important sense of the word, is an impossibility, if not an absurdity. The basis of its reconciliation with science as described by him is simply a radical change in its essential character and the utter disappearance of it as it is now conceived. The very essence of every religious cult which has received an extensive recognition among men is the belief that human destiny is more or less dependent on some being or beings higher than man, and of whom something material to human interests may be learned. Even Buddhism is no exception to the rule, for though ultimately atheistic, it "recognized gods many and lords many, products of the cosmic process and transitory, however long-enduring, manifestations of its eternal activity" (Huxley). The rites and observances of every religion presuppose a belief that something of importance in reference to divine mysteries has been discovered or revealed. If it is true, therefore, that nothing whatever can be learned as to the nature or character of the being or ultimate fact on which human destiny depends, all worship becomes futile and meaningless.

But that it is not true can be established to the satisfaction of practical men in more than one way. If there is a real parallelism between the development of an embryo and that of a species, — if, in other words, the theory of evolution is not to be deprived of its strongest argument, and conse-

quently of a certain portion of its credibility, — the highest type of terrestrial life must be maturing into a likeness to some parent organism or life, for such is the case with every living form in the earlier stages of its existence. But a containing organism would seem to be out of the question in the present instance. We are driven, therefore, to the conclusion that there is an invisible Being whom the race is coming more and more to resemble, that at the source of the evolutionary forces there is something which we may call a parent type, which, like the undiscoverable model in the embryo, is fashioning a likeness to itself out of ever-changing unlikenesses.

That the evolution of man has been completed is not to be supposed. In his case, what may be not inaptly called the process of gestation is still going on. Organically he may have reached his ultimate form, unless it is to be expected that some survivals of outgrown organs will yet be eliminated. The characteristics which he is to acquire in the future are not physical, but mental and moral. "When humanity began to be evolved," says Fiske,¹ "an entirely new chapter in the history of evolution was opened. Henceforth, the life of the nascent soul came to be first in importance, and the bodily life came to be subordinated to it. Henceforth, it appeared that in this direction, at least, the process of zoölogical change had come to an end and a process of psychological

¹ *Destiny of Man*, p. 30.

change was to take its place. Henceforth, along this supreme line of generation there was to be no further evolution of new species through physical variation, but through the accumulation of psychical variations one particular species was to be indefinitely perfected and raised to a totally different plane from that on which all life had hitherto existed. Henceforth, in short, the dominant aspect of evolution was to be, not the genesis of species, but the progress of civilization."

It is by following out the line of these psychical changes and determining the goal towards which they are tending that we are to obtain a rational idea of that invisible First Cause by which they have been set in motion and sustained. It is in its final characteristics that the embryo reproduces most nearly the parental organism; and it is in the traits last acquired by the human race, therefore, that we should seek to recognize that Being into whose likeness the analogies, or rather the inevitable implications of evolution, constrain us to believe that the as yet but embryonic human race is being shaped. Not in transitory organic forms, but in moral ideals which can never be improved, in spiritual attainments beyond which progress is inconceivable, in an ethical development which, though as yet hardly more than begun, may be regarded as foreshadowing the ultimate fundamental variation of humanity, are we to search for what evolution can disclose to us of the character that is behind all cosmic phenomena. "He that

hath seen me hath seen the Father,"¹ is peculiarly true in the mouth of ideal righteousness.

We cannot, then, but admit that this Being must be a mind, inasmuch as mind, however we may define it, is one of the attributes of the highest type of terrestrial life, and that it must be a spirit, since that is the name we give to mind which is not associated with a bodily organism. Nor if we believe that self-consciousness, the sense of individuality, is a higher endowment than the absence of it could be, are we at liberty to doubt that this Being who is working through the whole system of evolutionary forces is a person in some true sense of the word.

We need not allow ourselves to be confused at this point by such suggestions as that there may be a higher attribute of existence than personality. They are like the gleams of sunlight which mischievous boys flash from bits of looking-glass into the eyes of pedestrians, bringing them to a standstill, and so delaying their progress until the cause of the annoyance is found. We have no more to do with the question whether there is something higher than personality than the stevedore has to do with the equally practical question whether there may not be a fourth dimension of space. We ought not to stop and amuse or distract ourselves with it. We are justified in believing that the First Cause is at least a Person, and with that belief we must remain satisfied until we know that it can be enlarged.

¹ John xiv. 9.

And it is easy for us to obtain a rational conviction as to the moral character of the same Being. The history of the ethical progress of the human race is that of a gradual elevation of its ideas of moral conduct. If the virtuous man was at first merely one who was specially serviceable to his tribe, the advance of civilization soon rendered that conception of virtue antiquated and narrow. The ethical standards of each generation are higher than those of the generation which immediately preceded it. Institutions and customs to which no general moral discredit attached in one century are recognized as wrongs and abuses in the next. The growth of public sentiment in regard to human slavery, penal laws, the conduct of war, and many other subjects that could be named, illustrates this fact. The ethical development of the race is still proceeding. There is an influence at work on the human conscience which is steadily quickening its appreciation of moral values and bringing the conduct of mankind ever nearer to some absolute ethical ideal.

Nor can we doubt as to what this is. Altruism, unselfishness, spiritual love, is the moral goal which is looming up with increasing distinctness, though still in the far distance, and towards which the human race is directing its steps. Self-sacrifice, living for others, humanitarianism, philanthropy, — these are expressions which are recognized as suggesting the highest conceivable types of human conduct. The Sermon on the Mount is

extensively accepted as embodying in language the ideal moral life. Darwin names as the most noble attribute of man, "disinterested love for all living creatures." "Real goodness," says Max Müller, "is always in some form unselfishness." Spencer's ethics may be defined as a practical altruism. An absolute altruism is taught by Bentham and James Mill. The philosophy which found the ground of moral obligation in individual self-interest has been outgrown. Whatever may have been the origin of the "categorical imperative," whatever may have been the influences which developed in the most enlightened section of the human race its present ethical ideal, the fact is undeniable that love, or unselfish benevolence, has come to be very widely viewed as inseparable from a perfect moral character.

No one who has ever experienced the supreme power of conscience, whether in the form of remorse or in that of moral approbation, — especially when its highest praise or most stinging censure has been bestowed on moral acts which only finely developed natures would regard as important enough to merit a second thought, on purposes which have been frustrated before they were able to ripen into beneficent or injurious deeds, on thoughts which have never found outward expression, which have had no influence save on the soul in which they sprang up and whose high ideals alone rendered them noticeable, — no one who has had his conscience manifest its power in these ways will be

able to persuade himself that this awful faculty is merely a survival of certain ancient tribal or social instincts. Whatever influence these may have had on its growth, there is a large residue of effect which remains to be explained. Wallace¹ says, "Although the *practice* of benevolence, honesty, or truth may have been useful to the tribe possessing these virtues, that does not at all account for the peculiar *sanctity* attached to actions which each tribe considers right and moral as contrasted with the different feelings with which they regard what is merely useful." Speaking of truthfulness, which is so seldom enforced by law and which so often entails loss on him who practices it, he asks:² "How can we believe that considerations of utility could ever invest it with the mysterious sanctity of the highest virtue, — could ever induce men to value truth for its own sake or practice it regardless of consequences?"

It is little to the purpose to cite the innumerable instances in which conscience has sanctioned acts which are repugnant to a more highly cultivated moral sense. That it needs the coöperation of an educated judgment for its best practical effects is doubtless true. To quote once more from the author last named:³ "If a moral sense is an essential part of our nature, it is easy to see that its sanction may often be given to acts which are useless or immoral, just as the natural appetite for

¹ *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection*, p. 352.

² *Ibid.*, p. 353.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

drink is perverted by the drunkard into the means for his destruction." Its peculiar function is to inculcate a particular spirit, to impart a motive of the highest moral order, and it is the province of the reason to designate the different acts in which this spirit and this motive shall express themselves. A spring of water, when it first breaks through the ground, may be turbid enough. It may be laden with impurities which it has washed out of the soil through which it has forced its way. But the time is likely to come when it will have been freed from these and will bubble up as clear and limpid as the underground pools from which it comes. And so the "categorical imperative" is forced to make its way through endless strata of human ignorance and selfishness, from which are imported into its practical operations much that is absurd, much even that is immoral, much perhaps that is cruel and abhorrent; but it has the power to cleanse itself from these accretions. Its single comprehensive dictum, "Live the best life you know," assures to it an ever-increasing purity of current, which is not likely to be permanently fouled again by any sediment absorbed from the lower stages of moral development that it leaves behind. It will take on ever more and more the appearance of a special channel of communication by which the parent character is infusing itself into the slowly developing human soul.

But even if the moral sentiment has been generated solely through the operation of namable evo-

lutionary forces, these must be referred to the parent Being in connection with whom the race is being evolved. They are still analogous to those concerned in the process of gestation, and which shape individual germs into a likeness to the parent organism. We must still recognize in the result the character of the supreme parent. If we are justified in regarding evolution as a method by which a superior mind is developing a race into a resemblance to itself, we cannot escape the conclusion that the prime moral characteristic of that mind is disinterested love.

Life takes on a new meaning when considered from this point of view. It may be compared to a fountain through whose complicated jets the water is forced into various and even fantastic shapes ; but whether this spreads itself in every direction near the surface of the surrounding pond or rushes aloft in a majestic column whose white summit towers above the trees, it is always bearing witness to the existence of a reservoir which is higher than the greatest height which the liquid column attains. Terrestrial life may have been divided into its countless forms by the diversities in the channels through which it has been evolved ; but if so, then the loftiest growth of mind and morals which it exhibits is but the result of a spiritual law which is bringing it nearer the level of the sublime Life from which it derives its power of ascent.

The argument might be safely left at this point, and whatever objections might be urged against the

conclusions reached regarding the moral character which is behind the forces of nature could be legitimately classed as residuary phenomena. The evolutionist is obliged to admit that there are difficulties in the way of his theory. Darwin¹ recognized their existence, and alludes to them in the remark: "Any one whose disposition leads him to attach more weight to unexplained difficulties than to the explanation of a certain number of facts, will certainly reject my theory." I have an impression that even Newton failed at first to account for some troublesome facts by his law of gravitation. But men permit a strong induction to override some objections, and assume that they will be answered later on. It certainly would not be irrational to follow the same course in the line of reasoning which has been thus far pursued. If there appear to be facts in nature which can be quoted against the inference that there is a benevolent power above nature, it would not be impertinent to argue that the inference is so abundantly justified by other considerations that these facts may be properly set aside, as suggesting difficulties which are due wholly to the natural limitations of the human understanding.

But the objections referred to have really very much less weight than is commonly ascribed to them. There are but two that have any importance, and of these the more serious is the existence of moral evil in the world.

¹ *Origin of Species.*

But this phenomenon creates comparatively little difficulty in the mind of a theist who has accepted the evolutionary philosophy. From his point of view, evil did not come into the world as evil. It was originally even good, in the sense that it was necessary for the preservation of animal life. It was action devoid of immoral quality, because suited to the nature of lower organic types. It became evil in man only because he could conceive a higher standard of conduct. Moral evil began as the result of a battle between confirmed non-moral habits and a rudimentary conscience, in which the latter sustained defeat. It originated in the perception of a higher moral ideal than man had hitherto known or was as yet willing to emulate. It is a survival of a more primitive grade of conduct, and is therefore coördinate with the alleged imperfections in the human organism. Both have become objectionable because they are out of date, because they are the relics of something which was once useful, but is so no longer. A man is wicked primarily because he continues to act as an animal after he has reached a stage of moral illumination which enables him to appreciate, to some extent, the relative lowness of animal conduct.

We may say, in a certain loose, popular way, that shadows in the daytime are caused by the sun, but, strictly speaking, they are merely the partial survivals of a previous darkness. The surface around them is illumined by a light which does not

fully reach the surface on which they rest. The result is a contrast of which the eye takes note. Certain areas have not kept pace with the advance of day. They were as bright as any others until the sun rose; and they are now dark, not because the sun creates darkness, but because they have been left behind in the growing illumination. If the obstructions are icicles, the sun perhaps will melt them and the shadows will vanish.

And so, from the point of view of the evolutionist, sin was not originally sin, — or, more accurately, acts which are now classed as sinful were not, at the outset, morally reprehensible. They are survivals of lines of conduct which were once perfectly natural and wholly devoid of ethical significance. They are shadows which rest on the soul simply because a higher conception of conduct has dawned which has not as yet brought into harmony with itself the whole character of the man. It has not melted the ruling motives of an earlier and lower state of existence. Part of his nature lags behind his growing sense of moral obligation, and so creates the contrast which we call sin. As John Fiske¹ expresses it: “Moral evil is simply the characteristic of the lower state of living as looked at from the higher.”

I think it was Wallace who found the Biblical tradition of the fall of man in close accord with the principles of evolution, and suggested that the Serpent might be regarded as a symbol of man's

¹ *Through Nature to God*, p. 54.

animal nature gaining a victory over the feeble and newly awakened moral nature. Every person has his fall in the same sense. There is doubtless a certain period during which the conduct of an infant is devoid of any ethical quality, because the power to know right from wrong has not yet been evolved. The motives and acts of the child are prompted by purely sensuous impulses. It neither has, nor can as yet understand, any reason for doing anything whatever save for the satisfaction of a personal want. But sooner or later a sense of moral obligation comes to it which traverses its natural inclinations. A feeling of duty, of oughtness, which can only be gratified at the cost of self-denial, finds its way into consciousness. Opposing itself to a customary course of action which is of the nature of an incipient habit, it is overridden. It fails to control the conduct, and the result is a sin, followed by the first glimmerings of the knowledge of good and evil. A human being has fallen, in the theological sense of the word.

It is an experience which is repeated in the life of every one. Adam is man, not only in the Hebrew lexicon, but also in the moral history of each individual. The third chapter of Genesis is more than a myth. It is true, even if it is not to be regarded as historical. It records an event which, according to the new philosophy, must have happened, even though the precision of detail found in the narrative cannot be traced to an authentic source. Evolution holds that there was a First

Man in the sense that there was a first free moral agent, and will not deny that his dawning conscience must have failed to secure from his earlier-developed lower nature perfect obedience. The result was a fall, and a schism in human nature which was widened afterwards by perfectly explicable causes that will be briefly referred to in a later chapter. The sun will enlarge the icicle which it does not destroy.

It is commonly assumed that there is a contradiction between the teachings of evolution and those of Paul on this subject. We hear of theologians who are said to have given up the apostle's version of the fall of man, and to have substituted for it the theory of development. But there is no necessary conflict between the two. That Darwin and Milton are at odds on this subject is indubitably true. That the primordial ancestor of the human race was a being of large mental and moral nature, who by a sin has degraded the whole mass of his descendants below the same high level, is wholly irreconcilable with the views set forth in "The Descent of Man." But this is a Miltonic conception, and is not manifestly either Pauline or Biblical. As has just been shown, the evolutionist himself can find nothing inconsistent with his beliefs in the theory that man has fallen. What he is unwilling to admit is that man has fallen from Miltonic heights of character. That the fall consisted in a first act of disobedience to an incipient sense of moral

obligation is inconsistent neither with the language in which Paul describes it, nor, as I am persuaded, with any theological inferences that he derives from it.

The second objection to the theory that there is a benevolent power above nature is suggested by the presence of pain in the world. Much use is made by the materialist of the alleged cruelty of nature, of the fact that the lower animals are constrained by the very necessities of their organism to prey upon one another. The ceaseless tragedies of the jungle and the ocean are gathered together into a single horrible picture of slaughter and suffering. "We find that more than one half of the species which have survived the ceaseless struggle are parasitic in their habits, lower and insentient forms of life feasting on higher and sentient forms; we find teeth and talons whetted for slaughter, hooks and suckers moulded for torment, — everywhere a reign of terror, hunger, sickness, with oozing blood and quivering limbs, with gasping breath and eyes of innocence that dimly close in deaths of cruel torture" (Romanes).¹ It is thus made to seem that there must have been something illogical or some want of balance in the man

"Who trusted God was love indeed,
And love creation's final law —
Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravin, shrieked against his creed."

But there is a fallacy in this argument which few seem to detect. It consists in the tacit as-

¹ *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 78. (Open Court Pub. Co., 1895.)

sumption that the pain of many individuals can be added up, and that the result will be a greater amount of pain. The effect which is produced on a single sympathetic mind by the contemplation of many cases of suffering seems to have been carelessly taken as representing on a small scale an actual aggregation of that suffering into a vast objective sum total.

But there is really no more pain in the world than there is in the individual who suffers the most pain. Those who combine in a single mental impression the pangs and torments of all animate creation, and are horrified by the thought of an almost infinite misery, forget that the suffering which seems to them so vast is divided into as many parts as there are sentient beings in the world, and that each of these parts is subdivided in turn into as many portions as there have been epochs of pain in the individual life. The old theory of the atonement, which taught that the vicarious sufferings of Christ were equal to the aggregated torments from which the redeemed were saved, was founded on this same curious fallacy. It would have been enough for the purposes of its framers to maintain that the agony of the Saviour was equal to what would have been the punitive pain of the one ransomed soul which, but for him, would have suffered most.

The fallacy here exposed is of the same kind as that which many a man perpetrates when he thinks of giving up a proposed journey because it seems too great for his strength. The trouble

with him is that he contrasts, in some vague way, the strength which he is able to exert at the present moment with the amount he would have to put forth in order to cover, in an instant of time, the whole distance to be traversed. It is by the same species of sophistry that we persuade ourselves that a certain hill is too high to be climbed, because we allow our minds to dwell on the height only, and neglect to consider the long, winding, and gradually mounting path by which that height is distributed into an indefinite number of easily managed small ascents. One unconsciously reasons in the same false way who despairs in the morning of being able to do the work of the day, practically forgetting that it is not to be accomplished by a single exhaustive effort, but by successive applications of a not immoderate force, which will be continually renewed. In other words, men are prone to ignore perspective in taking account of the pain that is in the world, and to forget that what is present in the individual mind as a single harrowing idea is really dispersed and atomized by the countless individuals who experience it and by the sum total of the various periods in each life, usually separated by long intervals of peace, in which it has been endured. They who harass themselves by such a misuse of the process of addition are likely to suffer more through sympathy than most of those whom they pity suffer directly.

When pain is thus considered it becomes, as a rule, a relatively insignificant experience. The existence of the hunted bird or quadruped is not unhappy as a whole. The helpless beast that perishes in the jaws of the tiger ends thus what has been in the main a joyous career. The heartaches and physical pangs which, for the time being, take all happiness out of human life, are after all only passing clouds in the firmament of a generally tranquil existence.

And they would seem to be as useful and even as indispensable as clouds commonly are. If it is true that our cognitions are the result of comparisons, it is no less so that contrasts quicken our appreciation of our pleasures. Besides which, the offices of pain are for the most part disciplinary. It goes hand in hand with natural law. It is the best instructor and guide that one can have who aspires to walk in the ways of pleasantness and in the paths of peace. If it is true, as Spencer¹ asserts, that an organism perfectly adapted to its environment would live forever, pain must be considered as a condition of longevity, for only by its sharp admonitions can we be made to understand that we are out of harmony with the laws of life.

If there is any residue of suffering which cannot be associated with a beneficent purpose on the part of a Supreme Being, it can at the most constitute an objection merely to the doctrine of divine

¹ *Biology*, p. 88. (D. Appleton & Co., 1875.)

omnipotence. It may still leave the benevolence of the First Cause untouched. What is meant by Almighty power, it would not be easy to say. It is quite possible that it should be regarded as signifying the ability to do, not every namable thing, but everything that does not imply a self-contradiction, or, as it has also been expressed, the power to do everything, but not every combination of things. It may be that there are limitations to action in the nature of things which perfect knowledge would not regard as inconsistent with the existence of perfect power. Few would maintain that the mind which is back of all phenomena is not omnipotent if it cannot cause a thing to exist and not exist at the same time, or, to borrow an illustration from a child, if it cannot make a horse five years old in a minute. Even those who would not deny such powers to the Absolute must admit that the Absolute itself cannot be absolute and not absolute at the same time; otherwise, what becomes of their supposed proof that the First Cause is unknowable? If it is not cognizable as the absolute, it may be known as the not-absolute. It would seem impossible, therefore, to escape the conclusion that there are facts inseparable from being in its essence which must be taken into account when we define omnipotence. We may understand by it the ability to do, not everything that can be expressed in language, but everything that the essentials of existence do not preclude from being objects of power. And it may be that among these

essentials is to be reckoned the association of time with growth and of pain with human development.

There is one fact, however, that stands out with marked distinctness, and that is that the system of forces and influences which we call nature is capable of producing men of vast physical, mental, ethical, and spiritual endowments, and that what seems to us the darker side of life contributes most powerfully to this result. Courage cannot be developed without danger, nor fortitude without pain, nor patience without suffering, nor heroism without the shadow of death. If it is true, as Huxley¹ asserts, that "an animal cannot make protoplasm, but must take it ready-made from some other animal or some plant, — the animal's highest feat of constructive chemistry being to convert dead protoplasm into that living matter of life which is appropriate to itself," the teleological justification of the tragedies of the forest and the seas does not seem far to seek. And if it be objected that the ravenous species which have thus come into existence have no utility that would render defensible the massacres of lower organisms by which they have been built up, let it not be forgotten that it was by ceaseless conflicts with them that primitive man acquired some of the most commanding traits of his manhood. It was profoundly appropriate that the author of the first chapter of Genesis should include in the first command given by God to man a direction to subdue the earth and to have

¹ *Physical Basis of Life.*

dominion over every living thing that moveth upon it, for he thus indicates one of the earliest factors of human development. It was by pitting his strength, courage, and cunning against those of the wild animals among which he dwelt that man was able to cultivate the qualities that at first lifted him above them.

It would be an almost endless undertaking to describe the various mechanical processes which contribute to the production of that most complicated invention, a modern first-class battleship. If all the machinery that has been needed in order to give shape and quality to all the materials used in her construction, if all the appliances by which her plating, guns, explosives, electrical equipment, engines, fuel, and fireproof woodwork have been produced could be seen in operation under one roof, there are not many minds that would not be bewildered and helpless in the presence of such an endless multiplicity of detail, not many mechanics, even, to whom some of the processes might not seem without meaning and useless.

“What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!” We may well believe that the factory in which “this quintessence of dust” has been compounded must be the scene of many a recondite and mysterious operation. We need not think it strange

that a race with infinitely diversified mental and moral traits, which has been moulded by such inscrutable agencies as growth, heredity, environment, natural selection, competition, etc., should have required for its education the coöperation of many processes, of which some may seem to a narrow vision worse than useless. If the solar system, with its wheels within wheels, is but the assemblage of lathes and pulleys by which, beneath a "majestical roof fretted with golden fire," the various influences, physical, mental, and spiritual, are being shaped which are to unite in forming a race of beings of unlimited variety of endowment, of unspeakable beauty of attribute, it need not surprise us if we must guess at the office of some of the machinery and fail utterly to explain the necessity of much more. We are certainly not able to urge with any show of reason the pain that is suffered in the sublime workshop as impugning the benevolence of the superintending Mind, unless we are in a position to affirm with confidence that the ultimate results will not dwarf it into an insignificant consideration, and that it was not made inevitable by facts inherent in the nature of things.

We can now leave this branch of our subject. I have tried to show that it is as rational to believe that the human race is being shaped into the likeness of a superior parent mind as it is to believe the theory of evolution, because the former belief is a natural result of proofs which the latter cannot spare. I have shown, also, that this fact leads

to the inference that the Being whose existence is thus rendered an object of intellectual apprehension is endued with certain beneficent moral attributes, which may be summed up in the one word, Love. He possesses, therefore, qualities which identify him with the God of the New Testament, and we may now properly call him by that name.

CHAPTER IV

INDUCTIVE THEISM

KNOWLEDGE has been defined as “the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas.” We can know a thing only as we become aware of its likeness or unlikeness to something else. Reasoning, which has for its object the acquisition or the impartation of knowledge, presupposes this fact. It is a process which consists substantially in comparing things with things. It is a method of discovering or communicating new truths by tracing out their relations to other truths which are already known.

There are two principal ways in which it can arrive at knowledge: it may infer particular truths from others which are more general, or it may reverse the process. It may show that certain facts belong to a definite class whose characteristics are already known, or it may affirm that the characteristics of those facts pertain to the whole class to which the facts belong. The former method is called Deduction; the latter, Induction. These, however, are only approximate definitions, but they will serve my purpose. “When the conclusion is more general than the largest of the premises, the

argument is commonly called Induction ; when less general, or equally general, it is Ratiocination ” (*i. e.*, Deduction) (Mill).¹

As the terms above used are very common, and as it is desirable that the distinction between them should be kept in mind, I may be pardoned if I explain them a little more fully.

When a man, by the exercise of his reasoning faculty, has demonstrated that a particular fact which he is investigating may be coördinated with a number of other facts which resemble one another so closely that they have been erected into a group, he performs an act of Deduction. The mental operation which has taken place may be expressed in what is called a syllogism. This consists of three separate propositions : one, which is called the *major premise*, is to the effect that any object which possesses a certain characteristic belongs to a particular class ; another, called the *minor premise*, is that one or more objects which are not at the moment conceived as belonging to that class have that characteristic ; and the third, called the *conclusion*, is that the object or objects mentioned are, therefore, to be included in that class. One or more of these three terms, as they are also called, may be expressed negatively, but the principle remains the same. This, as stated by Mr. Mill,² is : “ Whatever has any mark has that which it is a mark of ; ” or, where both premises are universal, “ Whatever is a mark of any mark

¹ *Logic*, p. 125.

² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

is a mark of that which this last is a mark of." All men are mortal ; the president is a man ; therefore, the president is mortal, — is a syllogism. It contains a declaration that whatever possesses a certain characteristic belongs to a well-known class ; another, that an individual who is designated has that characteristic ; and a third, that he is consequently to be assigned to that class. To borrow Mr. Mill's phraseology, the attributes of man are a mark of the attribute mortality ; the president has the attributes of man ; therefore, he has the attribute mortality.

A very large portion of human knowledge has been obtained by this method. The results of arithmetical, of geometrical, and of mathematical reasoning in general have been reached deductively, by a mental process which could be expressed by a chain of syllogisms. In geometry, for example, the original major premise may be found in a table of axioms, which is made up of such indubitable truths as, "The sums of equals are equal." "Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other," etc. A minor premise asserts that certain lines, angles, etc., sustain to one another the relation described in the axiom ; and the conclusion follows that the fact affirmed in the axiom is true of them. This conclusion itself then becomes a premise in a new syllogism.

If errors are successfully guarded against, the results of this process are absolutely trustworthy. If the assertions in the premises are correct, the

conclusion follows as a matter of course, and is beyond suspicion. But on the other hand, an error in either premise perpetuates itself and vitiates the result. Mathematical reasoning owes its proverbial certainty to the fact that it begins with premises which are beyond question, and uses no conclusion for a subsequent premise which is not necessitated by the premises from which it is derived. A notable attempt was made by Spinoza to attain the same certainty in philosophical reasoning. His conclusions are said to be as rigorously established by his premises as are any of the theorems of geometry. But it is objected that the major premise with which he starts is so far from being a self-evident or demonstrable truth that it is a proposition which cannot confidently be affirmed to be either true or false ; so that the large results which he reaches in the end are not proved, but have in them the same uncertainty that attaches to the premise with which he began. But deduction, when properly used, yields facts which are incontrovertible, and as has been said, the world is indebted to it for much of the knowledge which it possesses.

The inductive reasoner arrives at his conclusions in a different way. When he finds that a particular fact is associated with all the facts of a certain group which have been noted by him, he infers that it is also associated with the remaining facts of the same group which have not come under his observation. If he thrusts his hand into a barrel

and draws out of it a handful of corn, he has no doubt that he has sampled a barrel of that kind of grain. Everything in his palm is a kernel of corn, and he naturally infers that the same is true of every other thing in the class represented by the contents of the barrel. If he picks up in succession a number of stones on the beach and finds that they are all more or less rounded, he forms the opinion that all the pebbles on the beach have the same characteristic. In either case he performs an induction. A certain fact can be affirmed of a limited number of things which he has observed, and he concludes that it can be affirmed, with equal truth, of all other things of the same class.

It is by reasoning like this that many of the most commonplace conclusions of every-day life are reached. The dairyman who thrusts his steel to the bottom of a tub and exhibits the thin cylinder of butter which it brings out expects that his customer will perform an induction, that he will judge of the quality of the whole from that of the small part which he has seen. The merchant who orders goods from the samples of a commercial traveler has simply resorted to an act of inductive reasoning. The fruiterer who puts his best strawberries on top assumes that purchasers will reason inductively. So does the farmer who places a high grade of wheat only in the mouth of each bag.

None of the inductions above described would be of any very great weight. They would not be regarded as scientific inductions. They would not

satisfy the rigorous requirements of scientific men. It is possible that the barrel may have at the bottom something besides corn. It is conceivable that the stones might have been rounded by forces which operated only in a very limited area. The dairyman may have accidentally or purposely missed some inferior butter. The samples approved by the merchant may have been of far better quality than the rest of the stock from which they were selected. The sources of error in the remaining examples are sufficiently obvious. Verifications of each of these inductions would be needed before it would possess anything like certainty. But these illustrations will afford a very good idea of the nature of the inductive process, of the mental operation by which attributes that are known to belong to one or more objects are ascribed to a much larger number which have not been individually examined.

Four methods are employed by the inductive reasoner, and they constitute "the only possible modes of experimental inquiry — of direct induction *a posteriori*, as distinguished from deduction" (Mill).¹ Apart from them there are no mental operations by which observation and experiment can be made to yield inferential knowledge. They are known as the methods of Agreement, of Difference, of Concomitant Variations, and of Residues. There is a fifth, called the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, which is merely a combina-

¹ *Logic*, p. 271.

tion of the two first named. The canons and examples by which the first four are illustrated in Mill's "Logic" are reproduced below.

The regulating principle of the Method of Agreement may be expressed thus : —

"If two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon."

For example, let the phenomenon be crystallization. "We compare instances in which bodies are known to assume crystalline structure, but which have no other point of agreement; and we find them to have one — and as far as we can observe, only one — antecedent in common: the deposition of a solid matter from a liquid state, either a state of fusion or of solution. We conclude, therefore, that the solidification of a substance from a liquid state is an invariable antecedent of its crystallization."

The canon of the Method of Difference is as follows : —

"If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs and an instance in which it does not occur have every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former, the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ is the effect or the cause or an indispensable part of the cause of the phenomenon."

"It is scarcely necessary to give examples of a

logical process to which we owe almost all the inductive conclusions we draw in daily life. When a man is shot through the heart, it is by this method we know that it was the gunshot which killed him : for he was in the fullness of life immediately before, all circumstances being the same, except the wound."

The following is the canon for the Method of Concomitant Variations : —

"Whatever phenomenon varies in any manner whenever another phenomenon varies in any particular manner is either a cause or an effect of that phenomenon, or is connected with it through some fact of causation."

"That the oscillations of the pendulum are caused by the earth is proved by similar evidence. These oscillations take place between equidistant points on two sides of a line, which, being perpendicular to the earth, varies with every variation in the earth's position, either in space or relatively to the object."

The canon for the Method of Residues is as follows : —

"Subduct from any phenomenon such part as is known by previous inductions to be the effect of certain antecedents, and the residue of the phenomenon is the effect of the remaining antecedents."

"For example, the return of the comet predicted by Professor Encke a great many times in succession, and the general good agreement of its calculated with its observed place during any one of its

periods of visibility, would lead us to say that its gravitation toward the sun and planets is the sole and sufficient cause of all the phenomena of its orbital motion ; but when the effect of this cause is strictly calculated and subducted from the observed motion, there is found to remain behind a *residual phenomenon*, which would never have been otherwise ascertained to exist, which is a small anticipation of the time of its reappearance, or a diminution of its periodic time, which cannot be accounted for by gravity, and whose cause is therefore to be inquired into. Such an anticipation would be caused by the resistance of a medium disseminated through the celestial regions ; and as there are other good reasons for believing this to be a *vera causa* (an actually existing antecedent), it has therefore been ascribed to such a resistance."

(The fact that a different explanation of the phenomenon was afterward given does not, of course, impair the value of the illustration.)

Every fact that science has learned inductively has been discovered or tested by one or more of these methods. The determination of the cause of dew involved the use of all of them but one. And it is through the rigorous application of them that modern science has been created. Any one who desires to understand the secret of the confidence which scientific men repose in the results at which they have arrived would do well to read the chapters in Mill's "Logic," or in the work of Professor Bain, which treat of the process of reasoning now

being discussed. Induction is nothing new. It is not a modern discovery. It has been known ever since men began to reason. Nor, as is commonly supposed, did Bacon teach men to search for truth by this method. They were doing so long before his time. His chief service to modern science consists in the fact that he was instrumental in doing away with the inadequate conception of induction which had previously prevailed, and in laying the foundation of the accurate and exacting methods which are now yielding such satisfactory results.

With these methods the world is becoming familiarized. It is learning to appreciate the certainty which inheres in the conclusions of science, and to crave it for all of its beliefs. There is a well-nigh universal demand on the part of thinking men for scientific proof of the propositions to which their assent is asked. It is a characteristic of the age that beliefs which rest on insufficient foundations are mercilessly swept away and consigned to the limbo of intellectual rubbish. Whether this growing desire for demonstrable knowledge is not, in some instances, being carried to excess was considered in the first chapter. I there incidentally discussed the question whether the demand for incontrovertible proof is always laudable, and always characteristic of the most valuable minds. That it is prevalent, however, and is determining the attitude which many persons assume towards various objects of belief is undeniable.

In no department of human thought is it more conspicuous and important than in that of theology. The traditional arguments for many, if not all, of the doctrines held as fundamental by the Christian Church are impatiently waved aside by men who have become accustomed to the precision of scientific reasoning. The theologian who should claim for his system a place in the category of indubitable facts on no other ground than that on which, perhaps, he accepted it, would cut but a sorry figure when defending it against objectors who take nothing for granted, but oppose an unwavering skepticism to every proposition which is at all open to doubt. He conceives a new idea of what is meant by proof when he leaves behind him the seminary — in which he may have been neither inclined nor encouraged to question the statements of his theological instructor — and undertakes to demonstrate his beliefs to men whose mental attitude is one, not of good-natured acquiescence, but of hard-headed incredulity. It is evident that whatever may be the grounds on which religious confidence should properly rest, it cannot but command a larger respect on the part of thinking men if it can be shown to be justified by strictly scientific methods.

The belief in the existence of God has rested, in many minds, on an induction. Because the component parts of the human eye, for example, are alike in the single fact that each coöperates with the others in producing sight, it is inferred that

intelligence is an element of their common cause. But even before the hypothesis of natural selection had attained its present popularity, this induction, being an instance of the Method of Agreement, was not held by so candid a logician as John Stuart Mill to create more than a strong probability; and in our own time its force is regarded by many as having been wholly vitiated by the theory that what we call marks of design in nature are merely accidental adjustments which have become noticeable only because they have preserved the species in which they exist, that every adaptation of means to end under natural law presupposes countless failures to accomplish the same thing.

It is urged, for example, that if the horse's hoof is admirably suited to the animal's habits, this is not because it was created with reference to them, but because innumerable horses or ancestral equine forms whose feet were more or less differently shaped were placed, in consequence, at a disadvantage which eliminated them from the list of living species. The anatomist does not now assume that the human body is a perfect mechanism, every part of which was intended to serve some useful purpose. He holds that the appendix, for example, is a useless survival of a more primitive organ, and that a man is better off without than with it.

If a charge of buckshot were to be fired at a target and one should lodge in the very centre of the bull's eye, it would be only a chance shot, an accident. The man who had fired the gun would

not be confident that he could repeat his success in a score of trials ; and if he should at last succeed in doing so, he would know that the event was no proof of skill on his part, but merely a stroke of good luck which, on the theory of probabilities, would be sure to happen if he should continue his practice long enough. And yet, if all the other shot-marks on the target should be obliterated, any person who was ignorant of the circumstances would suppose that that shot had been placed there by an expert rifleman. He would argue that some one had designed to plant a bullet in the exact centre of the target, and had done so at his first and only attempt.

So, if the infinite number of variations which have taken place in the forms and functions of all the living creatures that have ever dwelt on the earth could be set before us at once, and we should then realize how many of them might be said to show no marks of supreme wisdom, because they had failed to preserve those organic forms in which they occurred, we might see some plausibility in the argument that those which had the opposite effect and have consequently been perpetuated were only so many lucky hits, that they appear to have been the result of a definite and skillful aim only because the infinitely more numerous swarm of misses has been wiped away by the oblivion in which nature is wont to hide her failures.

Whatever force there may be in these considerations, — and I think it has been very much exag-

gerated, — they do undoubtedly weaken, to some minds, the old inductive argument for the existence of God, and have led even some able theists to deny that there are in nature any evidences of design whatever. But we need not, on this account, despair of enlisting in the support of our theism that method of reasoning which has had such signal triumphs in so many different fields of investigation. We need not fear lest our belief in a Supreme Being shall be justly deemed unscientific for lack of rational defenses of the kind that scientific men approve. It is possible for any one to obtain or to reinforce a belief in God by an induction as genuine and as broad as that which underlies many an undoubted scientific fact.

I am perfectly familiar with the case of a man who, in his early manhood, became oppressed by a sense of the barrenness of the life he was living. He knelt down on a solitary shore where he was spending his vacation, and earnestly prayed that his existence might not be wasted. A few weeks later, in the dead of night, he was startled and terrified by a sudden conviction that it was his duty to enter the ministry. He was in perfect health at the time. He had practically forgotten the vacation incident which has just been described. He was no longer troubled by the emotions which he had then felt. His thoughts were running on wholly different lines. There was no connection that he could trace between this overmastering conviction and the ideas which it had supplanted.

The course of action which obedience to it would necessitate was opposed to his natural inclinations, to the spirit of his early training, and to what he knew would be the wishes of his friends. He passed the remainder of the night in sleepless agony. For months he lived under a cloud. But although he resisted for a long time the inward pressure, hoping against hope that it would at last be removed from him, he could never free himself from it. He yielded to it in the end, and the sacrifice it cost him to do so was so great that he was even then persuaded that he would be excused from drinking the cup which had been held so persistently to his lips.

His subsequent career was marked by a succession of disappointments, afflictions, and trials of various kinds. There were moments in its earlier stages when the religious faith which had enabled him to take up his cross almost entirely failed him. His life was overcast by troubles which were so frequent and so peculiar as to excite comment, but which were relieved by spiritual experiences of an exceptional order, which could not be communicated to others. In later years, as he looked back over the lights and shadows which had so strangely mottled his maturer life, as he considered the results which his experiences had produced in the shape of self-knowledge, motives, and character, the one conviction that impressed itself on his mind was that he had been led all the while by an unerring hand, that he had been educated, in fact,

by a benevolent superintending mind. He was accustomed to read the writings of able materialists and agnostics, but was never for any great length of time free from the conviction that they were treating their subject from a relatively narrow and rudimentary point of view. He was satisfied that his theism, and to a large degree his religious confidence in general, rested on evidence immeasurably more convincing than the arguments which these writers opposed to the most important of his beliefs.

Now, what was the mental process by which he arrived at his ultimate religious assurance? It was an induction pure and simple. He took with him into practical life a certain conception of God, and tested it by the countless facts of a subsequent and protracted experience. The whole of his later career was a succession of experiments which he was forced to perform without any special sense of their significance at the time, and which combined in the end to corroborate all that was essential in his previous traditionary belief. He employed unwittingly over and over again all the recognized canons of experimental inquiry. The four methods of induction which have already been described could all be identified in the mental operations which had converted his original faith into what would be termed, in any other field of research, scientific knowledge. He was able to eliminate, by the extent and variety of his experiences, errors of inference which might be due to

mere coincidence or to morbid physical conditions. There was nothing lacking in this diversified and elaborate though unintentional process of investigation which would distinguish it, in any important particular, from that by which almost any accepted scientific fact has been established.

Now, the case of this man is not an isolated one. It belongs to a class which is very numerous, and it is far from being exceptional in its own class. It was Paul's¹ belief that God had made men that they might feel after him and find him. Some such process as that which has just been described seems to be suggested by these words. It is so often repeated on a larger or smaller scale, and so uniformly with the same results, that we are warranted in affirming that it will always yield them. The secret of the influence wielded by the prophet and the preacher lies in the fact that they have made personal and profound investigations along this line. The facts of science, for most men, rest largely on testimony. Almost all who receive them do so on the authority of certain individuals, relatively few in number, who have experimentally proved them. The only claim to superior credibility which these facts have, when compared with many others that are believed, is in the circumstance that they may be tested at will by scores of competent persons if the discoveries are called in question. So there are always men who have spent a considerable portion of their

¹ Acts xvii. 27.

lives in testing experimentally the teachings of theism. They may be classed with the original investigators in other fields of knowledge. They have acquired an equal right to say of the results of their researches, "We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen,"¹ and to demand that their statements in regard to the particular subject in question be not rejected except by those who have honestly and thoroughly performed the same experiments and have fairly drawn from them a different conclusion.

The scientific method of learning the truth of theism is closely analogous to that by which a man may sometimes prove inductively, contrary perhaps to the opinion of his physician, that the influence of a certain locality is the principal cause of his good health. He was brought up in it, perhaps, and although born with a feeble constitution, was always well there, notwithstanding indefinite and even careless changes in dress, diet, and mode of living. This is the Method of Agreement. He begins to deteriorate physically when he leaves the place, even though he takes up his abode in a locality which the experience of thousands has shown to be perfectly salubrious, and which is indistinguishable from the one which he has left except in the mere matter of geographical situation. Here is the principle of the Method of Difference. He may extend the use of it by visiting all manner of mineral springs and health resorts,

¹ John iii. 11.

regions of every description which agree in nothing, so far as he can see, save in the fact that they are not the place which he has temporarily abandoned. Here we have the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, which has not been previously described, although allusion has been made to it. The more nearly the climate in other places visited by him resembles the one first mentioned, the better he is. There we have the Method of Concomitant Variations. The medicine that helps him when at home is less beneficial when he is elsewhere. Here is the Method of Residues. As has been already shown in a quotation from Mill's "Logic," there are no other ways of reasoning by induction. He has tried these methods so many times that he is warranted in affirming that the conclusion he has derived from them is entitled, so far as he is concerned, to all the authority of a scientific fact.

It is obvious that this conclusion cannot be verified by any experiments that may be performed in the same locality by another invalid, because there are no means of knowing that two different constitutions are precisely alike. Although such general propositions as that a dry climate is beneficial to persons of consumptive tendencies may be experimentally tested by more than one person, the question whether a particular individual will improve in it can be determined by himself alone, and others can verify his conclusions only by observing the effects wrought upon him by his repeated experiments. But no one would doubt that a man

whose conviction that he needed to live in a certain locality is grounded in such a series of facts as is indicated in the example above given has performed a valid induction and has a right to regard his conclusion as scientifically proved. The proofs of the existence of God which are derived from personal experience each one must get for himself, but any one may obtain them. The concurrent testimony of innumerable witnesses is ample warrant for affirming that any man who will found his life on the hypothesis that the events of that life will be so controlled by an objective intelligence as to develop indefinitely those parts of his nature which he recognizes as best deserving to be called divine, and who will pursue that course of self-sacrifice and spiritual living by which those spiritual authorities who are deemed the highest declare that firm religious convictions are to be gained, may count on converting his hypothesis, in due time, into what he will find it hard to distinguish, in point of credibility, from almost any acknowledged scientific fact. If his life has been shaped by the highest religious and ethical motives, he enjoys a peculiar peace of mind and a sense of communion with God which will find fitting expression in those words of Jesus, "I am not alone, but the Father is with me." If he forsakes those ideals, this consciousness of a sympathetic Presence will depart from him, or be transformed into a sense of divine disapproval. And if he diversifies his experience still more by abandoning

his religion and substituting for it in turn all of the philosophical or scientific makeshifts which are offered in its place, his sense of what may be called the divine absence will only be enlarged. The more thorough his consecration to God becomes, or the more earnestly he strives to live a divine life, the richer will be his experiences confirmatory of his belief in a superintending Providence. And when he has made all proper allowances for the element of coincidence in the events of his religious life, and for that of physical causation in his inward experiences, there will still be left the conviction that neither the former nor the latter can be explained without assuming the agency of a divine Personality. Thus, all five of the methods employed in inductive reasoning will unite in producing within him an assurance which he will not, and need not, hesitate to call knowledge, for it is as truly deserving to be so called as many a belief to which the scientist does not question his right to give the name.

This argument, which is commonly called the argument from religious experience, has long been known. It is recognized in the New Testament over and over again. It is foreshadowed in the promise of Jesus: ¹ "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is used by Paul ² as a final demonstration of the truth in his words: "This only would I learn from

¹ John xiv. 23.

² Gal. iii. 2.

you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" But there is a danger that it will not command in some quarters, under its common name, all the respect that it really merits. It is an argument from induction, differing in no essential particular from the method of reasoning by which so many of the truths of science have been established. That it deals with phenomena different from those of matter, and cannot appeal to the products of the crucible and the blowpipe, constitutes no flaw in it, for as much can be said of social science or of the science of the higher criticism. Nor is it anything to the purpose to object that the method of proof which has been outlined demands too much in the way of self-sacrifice and high moral conduct. Self-denial and the endurance of hardship are very frequently the inexorable conditions of scientific discovery. Obviously, no man is privileged to dictate the terms on which truth may be learned, and there is certainly nothing antecedently incredible in the statement that the highest knowledge can be had only through an induction of the facts of the highest experience.

Moreover, nothing is required in the way of moral conduct and spiritual living on the part of any who would obtain an experimental knowledge of God save what is recognized by evolution as inseparable from its own highest ethical standards. It surely cannot be unreasonable to ask and to urge any one who believes that disinterested love

is the highest attribute of man to put in practice that belief as a means of arriving at certainty regarding the existence and character of a Supreme Being. Multitudes of the best and most self-sacrificing men and women whom the world has seen have founded their lives on the belief that such a Being exists, and have had corroborative experiences of its truth which make permanent doubt impossible to them. They affirm that the man who will consecrate himself to this belief, who will show the genuineness of his new purpose by appropriate ethical and spiritual conduct, who shall have interest enough in the success of his spiritual ambitions to pray earnestly and without ceasing for divine help, who will strive to be true to his lofty aim in temptation and in trial, and who will be willing to wait patiently for his experiences to multiply and to assume the right perspective, will attain in the end a religious conviction which will be indistinguishable from knowledge; and there is certainly nothing so unreasonable in these conditions that they need be regarded by any scientific man as excluding him from the infinitely important field of research to which they pertain.

And if there are those to whom this mode of seeking after God seems more scientific than religious, who find in it a disagreeable resemblance to the method suggested by Tyndall for testing the utility of prayer, and to whom it seems to reduce the loftiest objects of thought to the level of the most selfish of human speculations and inquiries,

it may suffice to remind them that mere intellectual curiosity is excluded as a controlling motive from this field of investigation by the conditions attached to success in it. There cannot be anything unworthy or spiritually degrading in a life-long effort to find out God by learning to conform to an ideal will and character.

The message, then, of Christianity to men of science who have only a negative answer for the Naamathite's question,¹ "Canst thou by searching find out God?" is simple and rational. It is not that they should abandon any of the facts which have been scientifically established, or distrust the methods of learning truth which have won their confidence. It is not even that they should accept propositions which are incapable of being proved in the only ways which they recognize as sound. It is merely that they should extend their researches into the realm of religion, and employ their favorite methods in testing the teachings of the Christian faith. One of the strongest arguments adduced in favor of evolution implies the existence of a parental Mind which is shaping a race of beings into likeness to itself. The ethical traits which are unfolding in the most highly developed natures in the form of moral ideals and resulting conduct render it impossible not to believe that an indispensable feature of that likeness will be an unselfish love which transcends all other ethical conceptions. And even if we discard altogether the implications of evolution, the fact that many of

¹ Job xi. 7.

the purest and most devoted benefactors of the human race claim to have had experimental evidence that there is such a Being as has just been described affords ample ground for a religious hypothesis which is worthy of the attention of scientific men. To take it into practical life, to subject it over and over again to the test of appropriate action, to examine it in the light of the various canons of inductive reasoning, to dwell in the atmosphere of personal purity and self-sacrifice which is indispensable to successful religious experiments, to exchange the relatively low motive of scientific curiosity for that supreme ethical ambition which is one of the conditions of spiritual discovery, — is to perform the grandest induction that the human reason can make. It is to carry the spirit of scientific investigation into fields of research in comparison with which all others are narrow and insignificant. And the command to do so is the gospel's message to an age of doubt.

And he who heeds the message will be sure to find a teleological meaning in life which will come to the rescue of the somewhat discredited argument from design, and go far towards reinstating it in all its former influence. We have discovered clear proof of an intelligent purpose in an hitherto inexplicable machine when we have learned that, whatever else it produces, it is capable of turning out one article of superior excellence and value. He who will pursue his religious investigations in the manner already described will not long doubt that

he has discovered the final cause of creation, the end for which the course of nature and the environment of the individual life have been established. He will have found the only thing of adequate value which human existence may surely be made to yield. Proofs will never cease to multiply that the ultimate cause of all phenomena is not a force merely, but a character, and that the influences and agencies of this world have been so arranged that the only thing they can surely be made to bring forth is a similar character. The ambitions of most men are doomed to disappointment. It is antecedently certain that relatively few persons will be able to gratify their desire for wealth, or fame, or long life. There are obstacles to supreme success along all of the ordinary lines of human effort which most men will fail to surmount. But a spiritual nature, a character founded on disinterested love, all can acquire. No matter what the vicissitudes of an individual career may be, adversity, prosperity, pain, happiness, the crosses, difficulties, and afflictions which thwart the hopes of men in other directions can all be used in rendering the life gentle and kindly, beneficent and unselfish. How, then, can we fail to see a designing Hand in that system of natural laws and forces which, after evolving its human masterpiece and developing in it an infinite variety of intellectual and emotional life, becomes transformed into a mighty workshop whose intricate machinery coöperates to fashion every man who so desires into the likeness of God?

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIAN SUPERNATURALISM

EVER since Hume formulated his celebrated argument against miracles, it has been increasingly difficult to secure from intelligent men a patient consideration of the possibility that such events may have happened. Our experience of the uniformity of the course of nature combined with our experience of the imperfect reliability of human testimony, or, in other words, the alleged fact that supernatural occurrences are less likely to have taken place than the report of them is to be false, is eliminating them more and more from the category of causes by which various historical and religious phenomena are explained. "History ends where miracles begin," says Strauss. The higher criticism, or, at least, some of its ablest advocates, exclude them from the influences by which the development of the Hebrew people has been shaped and to which Christianity owes its existence. Nor is it hard to see that if they are to be uniformly set aside henceforward as mere products of excited imaginations or as the childish exaggerations of uncritical observers, the prevalent view of the origin and authority of the Christian religion must be profoundly modified.

But John Stuart Mill,¹ himself no believer in the supernatural, but an author of marked candor, who has written for modern science its logic, concedes that Hume has made out no more than that a miracle cannot be proved to one who does not believe in the existence of a being or beings with supernatural powers, and with characters that are not inconsistent with their having performed miracles. And it was pointed out by an acute philosopher² a quarter of a century earlier that the credibility of the miracles related in the Gospels was not to be settled by simply weighing against each other the testimony by which they are supported and the presumption in favor of the uniformity of nature, but that there might be *a priori* considerations which would relieve the evangelical narratives from any disadvantage which might, in that case, accrue to them. It was his opinion that if there is reason to believe in the existence of a Creator who has regard for the happiness of his creatures, and that a miracle would aid him in promoting their welfare, the evidence that he has employed this instrumentality "is to be examined precisely like the evidence for any other extraordinary event." At that stage of the discussion which has now been reached we are entitled to assume that there is a Being of sufficient power and benevolence to work a miracle, and we may, therefore, rationally believe on evidence that such a work has been wrought,

¹ *Logic*, p. 440.

² Brown, *Cause and Effect*, notes A and F.

especially if it can be credibly shown that there was a real and imperative need of it.

What do we mean by a miracle? The word is sometimes defined in such a way as to prejudice a scientific mind against it at the outset. It is not a violation of the laws of nature. It is not necessarily even independent of them. As one of the discriminating writers¹ last quoted has suggested, "There is a general presumption against any supposition of divine agency not operating through general laws," and if a miracle is conceived merely as a special divine interposition, there is an antecedent improbability against it which can be outweighed only by "an extraordinary strength of antecedent probability derived from the special circumstances of the case." Whether there is an antecedent probability in favor of the Christian miracles which is extraordinary enough to overcome any improbability which may inhere in the conception of a special divine interposition need not now be considered; for a supernatural event need not be so defined as to exclude it from the sphere of natural law.

Some years ago an article on the nebular hypothesis appeared in the "Popular Science Monthly." The writer endeavored to convey some idea of the intense heat generated in the process of planetary evolution, a heat which for ages kept the earth in a state of liquefaction, and in comparison with which the white heat of the blast furnace would be

¹ Mill, *Logic*, p. 441.

relatively cool. The editor of the periodical seems to have been so impressed by the description that he appended a note to the article, in which he expressed grave doubts as to the likelihood that life would have appeared spontaneously on our globe after such a fire-bath. Bearing in mind, probably, that Tyndall had been able to free permanently from living germs more than a hundred and fifty different preparations by simply keeping them a few minutes at the boiling point, he found it well-nigh impossible to believe that, after a region of space upwards of six billions of miles in diameter had been subjected for ages to a temperature more than twice that of the sun, life could have appeared in almost the very centre of this vast sterilized sphere unless it had been imparted from without. I have only given the general drift of the editor's thought as I remember it, and have nothing to say in regard to the probability of the closing suggestion; but in making it he recognized what I conceive to be the essence of the miracle, and of supernaturalism in general. I do not imply that he thought it possible that life might have been brought into the earth by anything like angelic agency, or through the medium of a special creation. No doubt he would have contended that it must have made its appearance by the action of laws which deserved as truly to be called the laws of nature as do any of those to which the term is commonly applied; but he would probably have said that they were laws of which he knew nothing,

which were outside of nature so far as it had come within the scope of his experience, and which, to the best of his belief, had in no other case manifested themselves in the system of forces and energies with which science has to do. Now effects produced by agencies which can be so described may properly be called miraculous in the generic sense of the term.

A miracle, then, may be broadly defined as an event conforming to general laws which operate almost exclusively outside the field of one's normal experience. Its isolation from what are called natural occurrences is due to the relativity of human knowledge. It could be classified with them if the causes involved in its production were better understood. The group of effects to which it belongs is constantly diminished as education advances. The resident of the tropics who could not believe that there was a country in which the inhabitants could walk on the surface of a lake as easily as on dry ground was only refusing to credit what would have been a miracle had it happened in his own land; for such a state of affairs could not have been brought about without the introduction of a climate of which neither he nor his ancestors had had any experience, and which would have been wholly foreign to the geographical locality in which he lived.

A savage dwelling on the banks of a river which has always flowed towards the east, if he finds some day its current running in the opposite direction,

has witnessed what is, from his point of view, of the nature of a miracle. To be sure, the phenomenon could be explained by a better educated man as resulting from an exceptionally high tide or from a subsidence of the land ; but the savage, we will suppose, knows nothing about the movements of the sea or about geological disturbances. The laws governing both are wholly outside the realm of his experience. A force of which neither he nor any one whom he knows has any comprehension whatever has directly reversed what he had supposed to be an unvarying natural phenomenon, and he may logically give to the event the name which corresponds, in his native tongue, to that which we apply, in our language, to a supernatural occurrence.

I do not mean, of course, that the miracle is commonly defined in such a way as to include incidents like those just mentioned. My contention merely is that it may and ought to be so defined. Such incidents are generically miraculous. They are invasions of one sphere of knowledge by facts belonging to a higher, and, for the time being, an inaccessible one. They are capable, it is true, of being classified with other natural phenomena, but not by those who were startled by them. An event may be essentially miraculous to a person of limited intelligence and experience which is wholly normal to one of wider observation and knowledge. The supernatural is only that which is above nature as we understand it, and a miracle in the common acceptance of the term is that which is above

nature as any mortal being yet understands it. It is an event which has found its way into human history out of higher regions of causation than the human intellect has as yet been able to explore and comprehend.

That there are such regions we are already warranted in believing. They are presupposed by the theory of evolution. They are the source of the intelligence and the energy by which the human race is being moulded into a constantly improving type of being. They are the realm of mysterious origins whose secrets baffle the prying gaze of human curiosity. They are the reservoir from which flows the inscrutable current of causes which is shaping the material and moral universe. They are the undiscovered country on the other side of that "brazen wall" beyond which human investigations cannot be pushed. Presumably this unknown realm has its laws, and a resulting class of phenomena which a mind sufficiently enlightened would properly term natural. There can be no objection to supposing that these laws are not inconsistent with those pertaining to our own narrow sphere of observation, and that there can be no collision between the two classes other than of the kind that occurs over and over again between forces with which we are familiar and others by which they are sometimes counteracted. That one of these higher laws should, under special circumstances, produce effects in the lower sphere to which our knowledge is, for the present, confined, —

that a being should arise on the earth so exceptionally endowed as to be able to wield, for a sublime purpose, some of the powers pertaining to this higher realm of fact, — is not essentially incredible. It would conform to the analogy of the examples already given. The resulting effect would differ from them only in the fact that instead of transcending the experience merely of a tribe, an individual, or a body of trained scientific observers, it would be beyond all save the rarest experience of the whole human race. Such an event is a miracle in the usual sense of the term.

The uniformity of the course of nature, as that phrase is commonly understood in discussions of this subject, has not been established so firmly as to rule out the possibility that such occurrences may have taken place. It does not rest on a perfectly conclusive induction. The strongest form, perhaps, in which the argument for it can be stated is that every effect which has been investigated by competent observers in modern times can be explained as resulting from what are commonly known as natural causes ; therefore natural causation, in the ordinary meaning of the term, must be presumed to account for all phenomena whatever.

But it is certainly conceivable that although the facts bearing on this question may for a long time all point to a single conclusion, there may be others lurking in the background, as it were, which when discovered will necessitate a different inference. A machine was once invented for registering num-

bers. It would produce them in regular succession without a break from 1 to 10,000,000. Only an exceptional mind would doubt that if the notation should continue beyond that limit the next number registered would be 10,000,001. The previous induction would have seemed to most persons to render such an inference practically certain. There would be no more ground for withholding it than an Indian on the sea-coast, whose knowledge of the movements of the ocean conjoined with that of his tribe covers a space of more than 13,500 years, would have for not being absolutely sure that the tide would rise the following day. And yet the next number exhibited would be 10,000,002. The machine would then register several millions of numbers without a single interruption of the series, until the conclusion would seem to be established that no other would occur, and then there would be a second break. The inventor was aware of this peculiarity of his machine. It was inseparable from the mechanism. He furnished a list of the numbers that would be omitted in a series running as high, I think, as 50,000,000. In other words, the exceptions were as truly the result of law as was the rule, but they were due to a law that very seldom manifested itself. To all save the man who understood the mechanical cause that was behind them they were essentially miracles on a small scale.

Now there is nothing in the sequence of phenomena on which the belief in the uniformity of

nature rests that renders irrational the suggestion that unique and exceptional events have taken place as the result of causes which operate but rarely. It would be idle to contend that we are in possession of so many facts pertaining to nature at every epoch of time and at every stage of its development as to have the right to deny that there may have been "psychological moments" in which higher than the ordinary laws of nature came into operation. The evolutionist cannot relate the story of organic and mental development without virtually asking his hearers to suspend judgment at various points where miraculous interpositions might be suspected. As previously intimated, he leaves the origin of life unexplained. He does not pretend to account for the dawn of human consciousness. The passage from inorganic to organic, from merely organic or vegetable to the fully developed animal condition, from sentience to rationality, are cited by Mivart¹ as unexplained breaks in the chain of evolutionary sequences. The Darwinian theory is not yet able to make it seem utterly improbable that a new force must have been exerted to bridge over these gaps in the line of human descent. How far, then, is any one from being in a position to deny with any show of reason that nature's mechanism has been so arranged as to skip a regular number now and then and make a longer stride forward! How little is any one prepared to affirm that when the human

¹ *Essays and Criticisms.*

race was to enter upon a new phase of spiritual growth it did not receive, by some unusual process, a fresh impartation of power ! It is evident from what has been already said in regard to the missing links in the chain of natural causation that the machine is not yet fully understood. The grasp which science has thus far obtained upon the details of its construction is too little comprehensive to warrant any dogmatic assertion of the essential incredibility of miracles as already defined.

It need not be supposed, however, that the exceptional events which have thus been suggested must be as mechanical in their origin as the illustration just employed might seem to imply. The laws of nature may be nothing more than regular and self-consistent modes of divine action. The uniformity ascribed to them may be due merely to an adherence, on the part of God, to a chosen plan of evolution. But no difficulty will be created if natural law be conceived as analogous to a system of machinery through which God carries on his operations. To quote again from the author¹ to whom I have already referred so often on account of his general fairness, if by a miracle "it be only meant that the divine being, in the exercise of his power of interfering with and suspending his own laws, guides himself by some general principle or rule of action, this of course cannot be disproved, and is in itself a most probable supposition." In other words, it is not necessary to refer supposed

¹ Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*.

divine interpositions in the course of nature to higher laws of so rigid and mechanical a character as is often ascribed to natural law, but only to a superior Will which always acts in harmony with itself, and which has at its command powers that are not regularly exhibited in action on the relatively low plane of our present environment.

But even when supernatural occurrences are thus conceived, — even if miracles be regarded as coördinate, in all essential particulars, with events that are called natural, — it must be conceded that there is a very strong presumption against them which must be neutralized by equally powerful considerations if the evidence in their behalf, however cogent it may be, is not to be overborne.

“Nec deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit,”

says the Roman poet; and the rule which he applies to the drama holds true, no doubt, in our interpretation of the development of nature. Additional divine agency must not be assumed unless a knot occurs which can be loosened only by a new display of divine power. A much stronger degree of evidence would be needed to justify belief in miracles if they appeared to be superfluous than would be required if it were shown that they could not have been omitted without prejudice to the interests of humanity. In the latter event there would be a veritable knot in the process of human development which would prepare us for a glimpse of the divine fingers.

Several such knots might be mentioned, some of which will be described in other connections ; but from one point of view, three of them might be regarded as component parts of the one first to be named, which is the need that there was of a new moral force in the world at the beginning of the Christian era.

One has only to put to himself the question whether Christianity could have been spared at that time and subsequently as a factor in human development if he would obtain some idea of the deadlock which existed in the affairs of mankind. The old civilization was on the verge of ruin. Already the northern barbarians were giving ominous intimations of the doom that was slowly but surely moving down upon the Roman empire. The old religions had lost their hold on the most cultivated human minds. The pagan cults were scoffed at openly or in private by most intelligent men. Even Judaism had almost disappeared under the drifts of rabbinical perversion. The morals of the world were hideous. The gladiatorial games with which it amused itself suggested a widespread moral insanity. Tacitus despaired of the future, and thought that the Roman empire was under a curse. What hope was there that the normal moral forces then existing in the earth would be able to bring the human race in safety through the gathering storm ? What prospect was there that when the northern deluge should bury the civilization of the age under its oft-recurring

waves there would be buoyancy enough in the straining bark to right it in the end?

It is hard to write hypothetical history, to explain what would have been the course of human affairs if some important event had not happened, but is there any one who would seriously maintain that if the gospel had not been preached the human race would have reached its present moral altitude? We know that when Rome fell, the rude invaders found a religion awaiting them which they were fain to embrace. We can trace the influence of the Christian faith during the following centuries as it broadens out like a band of moonlight on troubled seas. We can see it assuming such outward forms and expression as render it always the dominant moral force of its time. We behold it steadily founding its numberless charitable and humanitarian institutions, compelling lawless minds to associate the idea of divine protection with human poverty and weakness, enforcing the moral law by its tremendous punitive sanctions; and the question what the world could have done without it must appear incapable of a hopeful answer.

That such a religion must have produced a vast ethical and altruistic influence on the human race could be safely deduced from certain antecedent considerations. It will not be doubted that a man's beliefs react upon his conduct, and that his convictions are likely to shape in some measure his life. It will probably be easily admitted that the

larger his conception of his essential dignity and of his spiritual outlook becomes, the more amenable he is likely to be to motives that tend to weaken the hold of his lower nature upon him. That a man who has a concrete proof of immortality which illustrates at the same time the ultimate triumph of an unselfish life, who is convinced that a sacrifice has been wrought by which his sins have been taken out of his way to happiness and that he has received an assurance of eventual moral success, is immeasurably more likely to respond to appeals for self-denial and resistance to his lower instincts than one who is without such incentives to high ethical conduct, would hardly seem to be debatable. Kidd¹ is undoubtedly right in teaching that there is no rational sanction for the conditions of human progress; that without the promises of religion there is no encouragement to unselfish living that would have any weight with the great bulk of humanity. The highest ideals of conduct are superhuman if man is only the head of the brute creation. They become intelligible and practical, they become sources of an intense moral stimulus, if they represent the possible final attainments of an immortal being. Those beliefs which have done so much to free the highest ethical ideals from the suspicion of being visionary and unreal, and to make them seem to many within range of a rational moral ambition, were furnished to mankind by the religion of Christ. And these beliefs,

¹ *Social Evolution*, chap. iii.

which have given so strong an impetus to unselfish living, have been built on the foundation of a supposed miracle.

It was the story of the resurrection of Christ that saved ethical Christianity to the world. Paul,¹ in an epistle whose genuineness has never been seriously disputed, emphatically declares that without it his preaching would be of no value. Whatever may be our opinion at this stage of the discussion as to the credibility of that event, it would seem impossible to deny that had Paul not believed it he would not have preached, and that his influence would have to be left out of any calculations we might make as to what Christianity would have effected in the world in the way of ethical improvement. And that such a subtraction would be a serious one we shall easily believe when we remember that it was the great apostle to the Gentiles who was chiefly instrumental in bursting the shell of Jewish exclusiveness and broadening the new faith, as it was held by its first adherents, to the dimensions of a universal religion.

The earliest sermon of which we have any record subsequently to the death of Jesus virtually grounds the gospel on the affirmation that he rose from the dead. In nearly every book which has come down to us from the age of the apostles the resurrection is mentioned. In the only work extant which professes to be a contemporary history of the infant church, the same event is made prominent in

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 13.

almost every public address ascribed to the first evangelists. Indeed, it may well be questioned whether the movement started by Christ was primarily an ethical one. It seems rather to have been of the nature of a philosophical or eschatological reform, a vast and beneficent change in man's conception of death and of his outlook beyond the grave. The matchless character of Jesus, even after it had been emphasized and illumined by his crucifixion, would not of itself have been sufficient to win to the new faith that immense number of adherents which rendered it a cosmopolitan cult in two centuries and a half. Strauss¹ concedes that the resurrection of Jesus was "the unconditional antecedent without which Christianity could have had no existence."

If we feel constrained to admit to-day that had it not been for a general belief that Christ had risen from the dead, his religion would have secured but a feeble foothold in the earth or none at all, we recognize the existence of the knot in human development of which I have already spoken. We acknowledge it to have been antecedently necessary that something should occur to convince large portions of the human race that a certain man had died and risen again, which is equivalent to saying that such a miracle, if it should take place, would be of indispensable moral utility to mankind. We are thus reduced to the necessity of inferring that God could best promote the

¹ *Orthodoxy : its Truths and Errors*, p. 80.

ethical evolution of man only by a resurrection, or by so ordering events that one would be generally believed to have taken place. Which of these alternatives is the more consistent with the character we have learned to ascribe to the Most High need not be asked. The reply which is made by the evolutionist to some of the objections of the theist, namely, that it is incredible that God would set such a trap for the human reason as the proofs of evolution would constitute if that theory is not true, would seem to be applicable here also. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then the evidence that he did so has been a veritable snare to the Christian Church for more than eighteen hundred years, a snare from which only a very few of its members have escaped. That a Being who needs for an ethical purpose a general belief that such a miracle has taken place would create such a belief by misleading the human reason rather than by performing the miracle, is a proposition which no theist will readily entertain.

If, then, the ethical needs of the human race which have just been considered, and which will appear even more urgent in later chapters, suggest the existence of something like a deadlock in the moral development of the human race which could be broken by no normal act of Providence that can be imagined, it would seem that there was a probability which might well be called extraordinary that an abnormal divine act would be performed. And if, as Mill implies, the antecedent

improbability against a miracle, even when conceived as a special divine interposition, would be outweighed by "an extraordinary strength of probability derived from the special circumstances of the case," it would seem that the improbability would be even more signally outweighed when the miracle is not so conceived, but is regarded only as a result of natural laws which transcend the bounds of all save the most exceptional human experience.

I have thus endeavored to show that a miracle is not necessarily an event which is outside the realm of natural law, that it may be due to causes which are normal to spheres beyond our present experience, that there is not only, at the point which we have reached, no presumption against it, but even some degree of probability the other way arising out of the ethical necessities of the case. It would seem, then, according to the opinions of the authors already quoted, that it is something which evidence is competent to establish; and we have only now to inquire how much evidence there is in favor of the resurrection of Christ, the crucial miracle, which I have selected because with it every other must stand or fall.

One of the strongest proofs that it actually occurred is found in the fact that it cannot be denied without creating a permanent gap in the chain of historic cause and effect. It is like a stone in a solid wall, and is held in place by the firm masonry of later events. Every attempt to explain it on

naturalistic grounds has failed. The theory of fraud is not now entertained. Competent critics no longer believe that the alleged death of Jesus was only a swoon. The hypothesis that the disciples were deluded by visions was born of desperation, and it very strongly corroborates the gospel narratives by showing to what unnatural devices those who dispute them must resort. It has assumed no form on which the rationalists could unite with anything approaching unanimity, no form which is not clearly irreconcilable with the accounts which they seek to explain. The original belief in the resurrection is a phenomenon without an adequate explanation apart from that of the New Testament. They who reject this explanation cannot account for the most important movement in the annals of the human race. Between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost next ensuing, as is generally admitted, something happened which changed the disciples from timid, cowering fugitives into men of aggressive force, whom no danger could daunt and no civil or ecclesiastical authority overawe. Out of that change has grown the mighty Christian Church of to-day and all the measureless influence it is exerting; yet rationalism has practically given up the solution of the question, "What occurred?"

Baur says,¹ "For the disciples the resurrection had all the reality of an historical fact," and that is all we need to know. It is "not so much the

¹ *Boston Lectures*, 1871, p. 376.

fact of the resurrection as the belief in it " which explains the history ; " the real character of the resurrection lies outside the sphere of historical inquiry." But the issue cannot be thus evaded. The question may properly be asked, What right has any man to dislocate history, to mutilate our records, without repairing the damage? The best evidence we have that any remote event took place is in the fact that it renders later events explicable. We must not wantonly discredit it if, by so doing, we destroy the historical explanation of subsequent undoubted occurrences. A self-consistent account of the beginning of the Christian movement has come down to us. It declares that Jesus rose from the dead, and by so doing wrought the vast transformation in the character of the disciples which all concede must have taken place. The fact thus asserted explains perfectly the events which followed. It is a cause psychologically adequate to account for them. No break appears in the development of Christianity from the days of John the Baptist to the present time. The history of the greatest reformation the world has ever seen can be followed step by step from the very beginning, and is always intelligible and self-consistent.

But suddenly the bridge which connects ancient and modern history is broken down. We are assured that the event which had rendered them a continuous whole did not take place. A cause is removed from an hitherto unbroken series of historical sequences, and all attempts to close up the

gap fail. When Aladdin's palace was built, one jeweled window was left unfinished until it was demonstrated that there were not gems enough in the empire to complete it. The narrative of the beginnings of Christianity, however, is a structure which has been handed down to us causally perfect, and the rationalist, after dashing the jewels out of its largest casement, neither permits them to be restored nor finds anything to take their place.

The true historian is interested not only in the political or social events of the past, but also in the causal relation which subsists among them. He is not a mere annalist; he is a philosopher. It is his mission not only to chronicle palpable facts, but also to give an intelligent explanation of the movements of thought which create such facts. The student of ecclesiastical history has a right to demand an answer to the question how the earliest Christians came to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. If he is not to be permitted to credit the causally sufficient statement that the event believed had actually taken place, he is entitled to claim a substitute for that statement in the shape of something that is psychologically reasonable, something that can be properly classified with recognized historical forces. He cannot be expected to pay such deference to mere theories or whims as to admit that a great gulf has become fixed in human history beyond which the most momentous and beneficent effects which have ever accrued to the human race cannot be traced upward to their cause.

We are now prepared to consider the direct historical evidence by which the belief in the resurrection of Christ is supported. Of course, it would be impracticable for me to give any satisfactory review of it in the limited space which I can allot to this branch of my subject ; but it may be safely affirmed that the evidence is stronger to-day than it has been at any time since the Christian records have been subjected to critical examination. Lessing, the celebrated German author, who died in 1781, although he did not accept Christianity as a religion, declared, nevertheless, that the resurrection of Christ was an event against which he would raise historically no objections.¹ This will serve to show what impression was made by the evidence in its favor upon the unbiased judgment of a capable scholar before the theories of Strauss and Baur had started the discussions which have made the last sixty or seventy years among the most remarkable in the history of Christian apologetics. During that time the Tübingen school and the advocates of the mythical theory have been hurling heavy shot against the genuineness and authenticity of the gospel narratives. It was affirmed with much plausibility and force by men of ingenious minds and broad scholarship that the Gospels were written much too late to reflect the prevalent opinions of Christ's time, and that they had gathered in the interim large accretions of unhistorical matter. But the dates assigned

¹ *Boston Lectures*, 1870, p. 292.

by these critics to the evangelical narratives have since been abandoned. It is now pretty generally agreed that the Synoptic Gospels were written in the first century, and that the Fourth appeared not later than the first decade of the second century is the view of the most competent living authority. The magnitude of the victory which conservative scholarship has won along this line may be best understood by comparing the dates assigned to the Gospels by Baur and those now adopted by Harnack,¹ the eminent ecclesiastical historian.

Baur.	Harnack.
Matthew, A. D. 130.	Soon after A. D. 70.
Mark, A. D. 160.	A. D. 65 to A. D. 70.
Luke, A. D. 150.	Not later than A. D. 90, probably earlier.
John, A. D. 165.	Between A. D. 80 and A. D. 110.

In other words, all four were in existence at a time when multitudes of persons were living who must have known whether the events related in them were true or not. Whatever weight of evidence was tacitly recognized as inhering in a contemporary document by the laborious efforts which the critics made to assign to the Gospels a late date must be accorded to them now that these efforts have miscarried; so that the sacred narratives occupy a stronger position than ever in conse-

¹ "Harnack's Chronology of the New Testament," *The New World*, September, 1897.

quence of the fiery ordeal through which they have so triumphantly passed.

The genuineness of the first four Epistles has never been seriously questioned, and is not denied at the present time. In one of these, written about twenty-four years after the crucifixion, — as near to that event as we are (A. D. 1900) to the disputed presidential election of 1876, — Paul mentions witnesses of the resurrection to the number of over five hundred, most of whom, he claimed, were still living. Among them were Peter and the other disciples; and as it appears from one of these same letters¹ that he had previously associated for a considerable interval of time with John, Peter, and James, the Lord's brother, he must have known whether the reported appearances of the risen Christ to them were, in their estimation, real. That he would question them with the deepest interest in regard to an occurrence which he made the central fact of his preaching it would be superfluous to affirm. Not only, therefore, does he declare that Jesus appeared after the crucifixion to himself personally, he gives us also, in a document written as near to the event as we are to the closing year of President Grant's administration, what we cannot doubt has all the force of direct testimony to the truth of the resurrection from the lips of the chief disciples.

It is not, indeed, established as yet by criticism beyond question that all of the Gospels were writ-

¹ Gal. i. 18, 19; ii. 1.

ten by the persons whose names they bear. Harnack, for example, does not ascribe the Fourth Gospel to John. But even if it should be admitted that there might still be some doubt as to authorship, any diminution in the value of the four documents as testimony which might result would not be serious. It is not, as a rule, the author who renders an historical work credible; it is rather the work which first establishes his reputation for credibility. The histories of Tacitus carry with them great weight, and to cite him as an authority for an historical statement is to render it at least worthy of attention. Suppose it to be discovered, however, that these histories have been erroneously ascribed to him, and that they were actually written by an obscure individual whose name, let us say, was Sonorus. What would be the consequence? The books would part with no atom of their trustworthiness. Citations from them would not be expunged from the work of a single living historian. It was the histories that won human confidence, not the name under which they were given to the world; and if such a discovery as I have suggested should be made, all the authority which had previously attached to the name of Tacitus would be transferred to that of Sonorus, and the former would be buried in oblivion.

We have the same reason for believing that the four Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear that we have for holding a sim-

ilar belief in regard to most ancient documents ; but it is very evident that the Second and Third derive no special weight from the names attached to them. On the contrary, they have rescued these names from obscurity, and have made them as famous as any that are known in literature. If we credit these two narratives, it is not because they were composed by Mark and Luke. The value of the latter of the two consists largely in the fact that it bears internal evidence of being the work of a competent historical investigator. The other may derive some slight importance from the ancient tradition that it represents the teaching of Peter ; but its strongest credentials — and the same may be said of each of the other accounts — are found in the twofold fact that it describes a character which the author was not competent to invent, and that it was received as authentic by the church from the earliest times.

Nor if the First and Fourth Gospels could be proved not to have been written by disciples of Jesus, would the credibility of what they assert as to the resurrection of Christ be destroyed. For it is now settled that the First was compiled when most of the disciples were still living, and it certainly could not have won from the churches the general and early acceptance which we know it found, if it had not been in harmony with the facts that were known to the earliest Christians. And the Fourth Gospel was in circulation when hundreds of the disciples of John must have been living,

who would not only have eagerly read a book which had appeared under their master's name, but would have promptly branded it as an imposture had it not been consistent with what he had been wont to teach. One can readily feel the force of this consideration by asking himself what chance there would be of foisting upon the Congregational churches in our own time a volume which falsely pretended to contain the theological system of the late Professor Park, when there are so many of his former pupils scattered all over the world who could readily expose the fraud.

Moreover, there is an important consideration which justifies the practical religionist in discounting, to some extent, the future, and anticipating a yet firmer establishment of the general trustworthiness of the New Testament records. The base-line of every system of triangulation must be measured off as accurately as can be done with the aid of the most exact and delicate instruments, for an error in it will be repeated in every subsequent calculation, and may be enlarged, a thousand miles away, from inches into rods. Impressed by this fact, the United States government, a number of years ago, had the line from which are derived the distances on our coast-survey charts remeasured; but the engineers, after going over a mile or two, and finding that their measurement differed from the previous one, as I have heard stated, by less than the diameter of a puncture made by a cambric needle in a copper plate, deemed it needless to proceed,

although the line, as I remember, was five miles in length. And no one would doubt that they were justified in so doing by the induction they had just performed.

Now, the primitive church has handed down to us a collection of books which may be called the base-line of modern Christianity. It is upon certain traditional views as to the date, authorship, and general trustworthiness of these books that current orthodoxy largely rests. For more than a thousand years the conclusions of the ancient church on these points were practically unquestioned; but during the greater part of the century that has just closed, the correctness of the old measurements has been strenuously denied. The traditional view regarding perhaps every book in the New Testament, except the first four Epistles, has been powerfully and persistently assailed, and even these have not always escaped attack. It is safe to say that about all that learning, scholarship, and mental acuteness could do to undermine confidence in the accepted theory as to the origin of these books has already been done. The controversy is still going on, and it is virtually a new survey of the original line.

Now what is the result thus far? The four Epistles just mentioned stand unimpeached; the traditional dates of the four Gospels have been practically reëstablished; what had come to be called "the critical heresy" of ascribing the Johanne writings to a single author has an advocate

in the greatest living ecclesiastical historian;¹ the Book of Acts is recognized by him as a genuine history, written considerably before the close of the first century by the author of the Third Gospel; while Renan conceded the genuineness of all the letters ascribed to Paul save the pastoral Epistles, and these he excepted only because he believed, what is by no means certain, that the apostle to the Gentiles died A. D. 64.

Now we have here an induction sufficiently extensive to warrant us in believing that the early measurement may be trusted, that the critical sense of the ancient church is entitled to more respect than it has been wont of late to receive. It is the very purpose and essence of inductive reasoning to draw from known facts inferences regarding others which cannot as yet be tested. In the present case we shall be acting quite within our logical rights if we conclude from the many points in which the judgment of the early critics has now been verified, that their opinions will in the end be found equally accurate in all other essential particulars which are still a subject of dispute. We certainly cannot be reasonably expected to suspend judgment in so important a matter as the origin of our sacred books, and so to deprive ourselves of the influence of their most inspiring teachings, until slow criticism shall have made its final report, when the trend of its results is manifestly towards the traditional views, and when we can already urge

¹ *The New World*, September, 1897.

in support of these an induction the same in kind, if not in degree, as that on which the whole elaborate system of measurements rests which gives us our distances along thousands of miles of sea-coast.

That the evangelists have faithfully reported the words of Christ there can be no serious doubt. "Who among his disciples, or among their proselytes," asks John Stuart Mill,¹ "was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee. As certainly not Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort. Still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they professed that it was derived, from a higher source." And Professor Romanes² says: "One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favor of Christianity . . . is the absence from the biographies of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge, whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere, has had to discount. . . . Even Plato's Dialogues have absurdities in reason and shock the moral sense, yet it is confessedly the highest level of human reason on the lines of spirituality when unaided by alleged revelation." These and all other considerations which make it impossible for us to believe that the evan-

¹ *Essays on Religion*, p. 253.

² *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 157. (Longmans, Green & Co.)

gelical writers could have originated the sayings of Christ prove in the most convincing manner that they were describing an actual character. By as much as we concede that the man whom they portray surpassed the power of human imagination and invention, by so much do we oblige ourselves to admit that they have been faithful in recording his life and teachings.

Now, that they were so scrupulously careful to report his words and portray his character correctly but were not equally so in relating the incidents of his life is psychologically incredible. They must have felt tempted to smooth down some of his harsher sayings. That they did not do so to any considerable extent is shown by the substantial harmony of their reports; and it evinces an historical fidelity and conscientiousness on their part which it would be unreasonable to deny to them when they are narrating the works of Jesus. Even Luke, who is credited with more freedom in handling his material than is either of the other Synop- tists, only clarifies the meaning of the text by his editorial changes. That he would abandon this accurate conservative spirit in recording the events with which the public career of Jesus was so thickly studded is beyond belief.

The force of this consideration is immeasurably enhanced by the fact that the miracles as a whole bear the stamp of the same original mind which has expressed itself in the parables. They are essentially parables, differing from them only

in the immaterial fact that they teach by signs rather than by words. In both cases the meaning lies beneath the surface, and the shell must be broken before the kernel can be found. This feature of the miracles, the pictorial and dramatic illustration which they so graphically afford of the profoundest religious truths, the striking harmony there is between them and the oral teachings of Jesus, precludes the idea that they were later accretions to the record of Christ's life. Their very depth and spirituality negative such a theory. There is a peculiar appropriateness in them, a parallelism with the moral teachings of Jesus, which stamps them as an integral part of the original message.

Nor is it of any avail to urge against the credibility of the resurrection the uncritical character of the earliest observers. There is a bit of sophistry in this hackneyed objection which cannot be too often exposed. There are facts which can be established just as well by the testimony of uncritical observers as by that of an equal number of trained experts. No man is so ignorant and superstitious that his testimony in the witness-box as to whether he had seen an intimate friend at a given place and time would not equal in value, if he were believed to be honest, that of a college professor to the same fact. If a school-teacher is reported to have sailed for Europe and a dozen of her pupils declare a week afterwards that they have just met and talked with her on the street, they may not be

over ten years of age and yet their testimony will outweigh that of a dozen able lawyers who may try to prove that she could not have been in the country. The evidence of critical observers has no superior value save in cases where critical observation is needed. That the disciples were not competent to say whether or not they had met and conversed with their Master after his crucifixion, and that the early historians, when they were not themselves disciples, were not capable of relating accurately what the disciples had reported in this connection, is not only incredible in itself, but, as already remarked, is inconsistent with the ability they have displayed in communicating or recording other matters demanding precision of statement and clearness of recollection.

Let us now briefly reconsider what is required of us by those who would forbid us to hold as true the story of Christ's resurrection. We are to throw away the only link which connects the history of the last eighteen hundred years with that of the preceding age, and so create an inexplicable and permanent gap in the annals of the human race; we are to concede that the great ethical progress of mankind during those years was made possible only because in the providence of God an unaccountable delusion arose and was perpetuated for centuries; we are to suppose that, contrary to all historical precedent and all psychological probability, a dozen hard-headed, unimaginative working-men wrongly believed that they had beheld and

talked with a most intimate friend on many occasions after his death, himself the most unique and inimitable personality the world has ever seen; we are to hold, contrary again to what we know of the natural working of the human mind, that men who were scrupulously careful in recording the words of Christ parted with all historical veracity when relating his deeds, and not only allowed themselves to describe minutely his resurrection from the dead, although it had not occurred, but even attributed to him various utterances made beforehand in reference to that imaginary event and at different times after it had taken place. And why are we to do all this? Merely to evade the otherwise irresistible inference that God has pieced out the laws of a lower by those of a higher world in order to impart to the human race a moral light and stimulus which it would not otherwise have obtained, and without which no high ethical development was to be looked for. Would it not be more rational for us, if we believe in God, to believe that he is godlike? that he has set a higher value on the moral welfare of the human race than on alleged precedents in natural law?

It was not an error, then, that Paul founded his whole mission on the resurrection of Christ, for the supernaturalism inseparable from traditional Christianity rests upon it. "Beyond controversy," says Strauss,¹ "the truth of Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus." If it cannot

¹ *Boston Lectures*, 1871, p. 375.

be credited, no other miracle can. If it may be legitimately believed, the wall of rationalism is breached and must crumble rapidly. If one miracle is admitted, relatively little evidence is needed to prove a second. The ascension is a natural and consistent sequel to the resurrection, for in no other way is the ultimate disappearance of Christ from the earth accounted for. The incarnation is almost presupposed, for one who left the world in so exceptional a manner may easily be believed to have entered it in some extraordinary way. That marvels should mark the intervening career of one who came and went so impressively could hardly excite surprise, especially when they exhibit the same individuality and originality which inhere in the oral teachings of him who wrought them and illustrate spiritual truths that are above the average human comprehension.

The diminished need of evidence extends, also, even to the wonders recorded in the Old Testament. If we find gold at the mouth of a stream, we shall not be surprised to learn that some grains have been discovered miles away among the hills from which the water flows. If Christianity has had its miracles, it was to have been expected that the religion out of which it sprang was not wholly without them. And it cannot but be a dubious and rash proceeding at the best to assume that every supernatural tale in the older books is false, and to rewrite Jewish history in the light of that assumption.

CHAPTER VI

A STUDY OF HUMAN TESTIMONY

I HAVE indicated in the foregoing chapter that if a miracle is not in itself incapable of being proved, or, in other words, if any conceivable volume of testimony could demonstrate that a strictly supernatural event ever took place, the evidence for the resurrection of Christ is sufficient both in quality and quantity to entitle that occurrence to a place among the practical working beliefs of religious men. In doing so, however, I have assumed that the evidence is in harmony with itself, that there is no doubt as to what it really teaches. Lest it may be thought, however, that I have ignored an important objection to the credibility of the resurrection by failing to notice the alleged disagreements and contradictions among the witnesses who have reported it, I may be pardoned if I treat this subject at considerable length. I am all the more disposed to do so because I think it is one which, as a rule, is imperfectly understood.

How close a correspondence have we a right to expect in independent narratives of the same event? Or, to state the same question in a different way, to what extent is the general credi-

bility of history impaired by discrepancies in the accounts of those who relate it? It is important to be able to give at least approximately correct answers to these questions, for otherwise we can form no proper estimate of the value of the Christian evidences.

That peculiarly unreasonable and impracticable views are held in this connection appears from the character of the discrepancies which are frequently cited as affecting the trustworthiness of the gospel narratives. For example, Matthew states that Jesus was met on one occasion by two demoniacs, but Mark and Luke in their accounts of the same incident mention but one. Again, Matthew and Mark describe the healing of a blind man as Jesus was approaching Jericho, but the Third Gospel says it took place after he had left that city. In this same account, also, Matthew relates that two men were cured, but Mark and Luke agree in mentioning but one. Once more, the tradition or the documentary source from which the Synoptists are supposed to have derived their material gave apparently the fifteenth of Nisan as the date of the crucifixion, but the Fourth Gospel is commonly understood to assign it to the fourteenth. These may serve as a sample of the discrepancies which have often been urged as making against the general credibility of the sacred narratives.

It may be freely granted that to one who holds the old theory of verbal inspiration such disagreements might present insoluble difficulties. That

the Holy Spirit would dictate two irreconcilable versions of the same event is not to be supposed, and the shifts that must sometimes be resorted to by advocates of that theory in order to avoid such a conclusion are little calculated to enhance respect for the historic value of the Christian records. But assuming that the inspiration of the New Testament affords an illustration of what might be called an economy of the supernatural, that it connotes no more of special divine assistance than is necessary to bring certain religious truths within reach of normal human faculties, that it means, in the present case, not such an influence brought to bear on witnesses as would change the inherent character of human testimony, but only such a providential use of such testimony, with all its natural defects and inaccuracies, as would render it a competent medium for the communication of vital historical facts, are the alleged discrepancies in the sacred writings inconsistent either with a rational view of the inspiration of these writings or with their obvious aim to serve as reliable sources of religious information ?

We can determine the true answer to this question only by acquainting ourselves accurately with the character of human testimony in general, and especially by ascertaining how nearly witnesses usually agree when reporting important events which are well calculated to make a deep impression on the memory, and when they evidently mean to report them correctly. I am able to furnish a striking

illustration which tends to show how unreasonable it is to look for entire harmony among competent witnesses even to an event of superlative significance, and, on the other hand, how needless it is, so far as the general credibility of an account is concerned, that there should be a perfect agreement in the reports of those who relate it.

My example is rendered peculiarly pertinent and impressive by the high character of the witnesses who are quoted. It is very seldom that a case is tried in court in which the evidence is furnished by persons of so high standing. They are General Philip H. Sheridan, of the United States Army, Archibald Forbes, the distinguished English newspaper correspondent, Count von Bismarck, Dr. Busch, his secretary and biographer, Dr. Russell, the famous representative of the "London Times," besides a weaver named Fournaise and his wife, who, although of a lower social and mental grade than the others, were apparently none the less competent to observe intelligently and report correctly the facts which they relate. The matter to which they all testify is the surrender of Napoleon the Third at Sedan, one of the most striking, if not startling, events of the nineteenth century. It would seem that an occurrence of such magnitude described by persons so eminent as, with two exceptions, these were, most of whom were eyewitnesses of the incidents they narrate, while the others derived their information directly from participants in what took place,

would be sure to be reported in such a manner as to leave no reasonable doubt as to anything that actually occurred. How far short of a complete fulfillment this anticipation would fall may be seen in what follows, which I have taken from an article by Archibald Forbes in the "Nineteenth Century" for March, 1892. I will give first in a condensed form the testimony of each witness in succession, and then point out the discrepancies in their several narratives.

1. The facts according to General Sheridan.

"About that hour (6 A. M.) there came through the gate an open carriage containing two men, one of whom Sheridan recognized as the Emperor Napoleon." (Note by Archibald Forbes: "Sheridan always persisted vehemently that the carriage contained but two men, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. 'Must I not believe my own eyes!' he exclaimed to me not three months before his death.") "Sheridan followed the carriage towards Donchery. Not quite a mile short of that place it halted to await the arrival of Bismarck. After Bismarck came, the party moved on about one hundred yards and stopped opposite a weaver's cottage. The Emperor and Bismarck entered the cottage. Reappearing in a quarter of an hour, they seated themselves in the open air on chairs brought by the weaver. They talked there for fully an hour."

2. Bismarck's account, as given to Busch a few days later : —

About 6 A. M. General Reillé appeared at Bismarck's quarters at Donchery and asked him to come to the Emperor. He met the Emperor at Frenois, a mile and three fourths from Donchery. Napoleon was seated in a carriage with three officers, and there were three others on horseback. Napoleon stopped his carriage opposite a weaver's cottage two hundred paces from the village (Frenois) and desired to remain there. Bismarck accompanied him to a small room on the first floor, with one window. The conversation here lasted nearly three quarters of an hour. Bismarck rode away to Donchery to dress, and, on his return in full uniform, conducted Napoleon to Château Bellevue with a guard of honor of cuirassiers.

3. Bismarck, in his official report, "specifically states that his long interview with the Emperor, 'which lasted nearly an hour,' was held inside the weaver's cottage" (Forbes).

4. Archibald Forbes's account:—

"The following is what I personally saw, condensed from very copious notes taken at the time, watch in hand.

"Looking out from my bedroom window into the *Place* of Donchery at one quarter to six in the morning (September 2), I observed a sad-faced French officer turning his horse away from Bismarck's quarters. (Knew him afterwards to be General Reillé.) He had scarcely disappeared when Bismarck emerged and followed his track on a bay horse. We followed him promptly on foot. Fell

behind but pushed on, and at about two kilometres from Donchery met an open carriage in which sat four officers in French uniform. In one of them we simultaneously recognized the Emperor. Behind, close to the carriage, rode Bismarck, followed by Reillé and two other French officers. The carriage halted in front of a weaver's cottage at Napoleon's instance. I saw him turn round, and heard the request he made to Bismarck. The Emperor hurried behind the house (7.10), while Bismarck and Reillé went in but almost immediately came out. Soon the Emperor returned, and he and Bismarck then entered, going up to the first floor. At twenty minutes past seven they came out, Bismarck a few moments in advance, sat down in front of the cottage, and had an outdoor conversation which lasted nearly an hour. Bismarck used the gesture of bringing a finger of the left hand down on the palm of the right. The weaver was all the time overlooking the pair from the window. (I asked him if he overheard anything. He said, 'No, because they spoke in German.' Bismarck, he said, — *i. e.*, 'Monsieur in the white cap,' — addressed him in French, but the Emperor said, 'Let us talk in German.') At eight Moltke came, but twenty minutes later left. Bismarck departed at twenty minutes to nine."

5. Bismarck again : —

He happened to see Forbes's letter and instructed Busch to contradict certain of his statements. He persevered in the statement that he had spent

three fourths of an hour at least inside the cottage in an upstairs room, and was only a short time outside with the Emperor. He did not strike his finger into his palm, which was no trick of his. Did not speak German with the Emperor, but did with the people of the house.

6. Dr. Russell (narrative of an account given to him by Bismarck) : —

“I proposed that we should go into a little cottage close at hand, but the house was not clean, and so chairs were brought outside and we sat together talking.”

7. Recollections of Madame Fournaise, the weaver's wife, while the events were fresh in her memory:

“The Emperor, disliking to pass through the crowds of German soldiers on the road to Donchery,” came into her room. For a quarter of an hour he and Bismarck conversed in low tones in German, of which she, remaining in the outer room, occasionally caught a word. Then Bismarck rose and came clattering out. “Il avait une très mauvaise mine.” She warned him of the break-neck stairs, but he sprang down them like a man of twenty, mounted his horse, and rode away towards Donchery. When she entered the room in which the Emperor was left, she found him with his face buried in his hands. “Can I do anything for you?” she asked. “Only pull down the blinds,” was his answer. He would not speak to General Lebrun, who came to him. In about half an hour Bismarck returned in full dress and preceded the

Emperor downstairs. The Emperor quitted the house and entered the carriage which was to convey him to Château Bellevue. On the threshold he gave her four twenty-franc pieces. "He put them into my own hand, and said plaintively, 'This is perhaps the last hospitality I shall receive in France.' "

8. Forbes again : —

"Madame Fournaise's memory has failed her. After Bismarck's departure Napoleon, who was then out-of-doors, sauntered up and down the path, limping slightly and smoking hard. Later he sat down among the officers. At quarter past nine came cuirassiers and formed a cordon round the rear of the block of cottages. A lieutenant, without a sign of salute, stationed two troopers behind the Emperor and commanded, 'Draw swords!' At quarter to ten Bismarck returned."

Let us now consider the discrepancies in the above accounts.

Sheridan said there were only two men in the carriage, and persisted in the statement as long as he lived. Bismarck, according to Busch, said there were four, and is corroborated by Forbes.

Sheridan makes no mention of mounted officers accompanying the carriage. Bismarck says there were three, and so does Forbes, who states that one of them was General Reillé.

Sheridan says Bismarck met the Emperor not quite a mile from Donchery. Bismarck says a

mile and three fourths. Forbes says he himself met the carriage about a mile and one quarter (two kilometers) from Donchery. (Bismarck had already met it and was returning with it.)

Sheridan says Bismarck and Napoleon remained in the cottage a quarter of an hour and then talked outside for fully an hour; Bismarck (per Busch) that he conversed *in the room* for nearly three quarters of an hour. (No mention of any conversation outside.) In his official report he states that the interview was in the cottage and lasted nearly an hour. (Still no reference to any talk outside.) Forbes declares that the Emperor alighted at 7.10, came out of the house at 7.20, and that the conversation *out-of-doors* lasted nearly an hour. Bismarck corrects this statement and reiterates that he spent at least three quarters of an hour *in the house*, but only a short time with the Emperor outside. Russell reports that Bismarck told him that the house was not clean, that "chairs were brought outside and we sat together talking." Madame Fournaise says they talked in the room for a quarter of an hour but, by necessary implication, not outside at all.

Bismarck (per Busch) says that Napoleon proposed to enter the cottage. Forbes agrees, having heard Napoleon make the request. Dr. Russell says Bismarck told him that he (Bismarck) proposed it. Madame Fournaise incidentally corroborates the majority by her explanation that Napoleon was unwilling to pass through the German troops.

Forbes testifies that the weaver said they spoke German outside. Madame Fournaise affirms that they did inside, and that she caught a word now and then. Bismarck denies that they did so at all.

Forbes says Bismarck made a particular gesture with his finger ; Bismarck says he did not, and that he has no such trick.

Now most of these discrepancies may be conjecturally explained in harmony with well-known principles of mental action. Assuming provisionally that the narrative of Forbes is the most likely to be correct, for the reason that it was a part of his business to make his statements accurate, that it was necessary for him to put them in writing immediately in order that his paper might receive them promptly, and that he was so alive to the importance of precision that he made his observations "watch in hand," we have a standard into conformity with which we can bring most of the discordant utterances without transcending the bounds of reasonable supposition.

The disagreements as to distance can be plausibly explained by the familiar fact that people vary very much in their capacity to estimate it, but more especially by the consideration that there is likely to be a great difference between an estimate made on the spot and one made afterwards from only a recollection of the spot. General Sheridan's rooted conviction that there were but two officers in the carriage is easily accounted for when it is

considered that men are much more likely to be mistaken when they maintain that what they do not remember did not happen than when they contend that what they do remember did occur. His possible ignorance of the fact that there were mounted officers present may only show that the circumstance made no lasting impression on his memory. His testimony could, from the very nature of the case, only be negative, viz. : that he did not recollect seeing four men in the carriage and, perhaps, three horsemen behind it. His testimony when thus expressed does not contradict that of the others. His question, "Must I not believe my own eyes?" does not convey a right view of the case. It is much less convincing when put in the proper form : Must I not believe that that did not exist which I may have forgotten that I saw?

The disagreement as to who proposed to enter the cottage, in which Bismarck is quoted against himself, cannot be easily explained except by assuming some carelessness on his part in expressing himself or some misunderstanding of his remarks on the part of Dr. Russell.

The testimony as to the time spent in the cottage and outside is hard to reconcile. That the exact time spent within was not quite ten minutes seems settled by Forbes's accurate specifications. The Emperor alighted at 7.10 by the watch and came out of the house at 7.20. Sheridan practically agrees with Forbes. They remained in the cottage a quarter of an hour, he says. As this was

probably only an estimate made from memory, after the event, it may be regarded as tallying well enough with Forbes's statement. The same, of course, may be said of Madame Fournaise's testimony that they talked in the room for a quarter of an hour. This point, then, would be regarded as determined beyond all doubt, were it not for Bismarck's persistent declarations. "We conversed in the room for nearly three quarters of an hour," he told Busch, while in his official report he lengthens the time and says the interview in the cottage lasted nearly an hour. And again, after seeing Forbes's account, he took pains to have Busch reaffirm that at least three quarters of an hour were spent *within* the house.

But these statements, while they leave no doubt in our minds as to the length of time Bismarck firmly believed he had remained in the house, would not of themselves give us much trouble. In nothing do men disagree oftener than in their estimates of time. The minutes pass very rapidly with one person while they seem to another to drag. A pleasant interview might seem short, while one of a disagreeable nature would seem long. That Bismarck's interview was of the latter kind would not appear doubtful if we can trust Madame Fournaise's statement that he emerged from it with a scowling countenance. As it is not at all likely that he consulted his watch in order to determine the time precisely, it might be plausibly conjectured that the interview was so painful that

it seemed long to him, and that when he came afterwards to translate into figures the impression made on his memory, he could not believe that the conversation had lasted less than three quarters of an hour. And this view is incidentally favored by his remark to Dr. Russell that *the house was not clean*, and that chairs were brought outside. If the room was so untidy that they would not remain in it, it is in the highest degree improbable that they waited three quarters of an hour before leaving it.

But the truth of the matter seems to be that Bismarck has added together the time spent in the house and that passed outside. With the exception of the remark made to Dr. Russell which has just been quoted, he makes no allusion to any out-of-door conversation, or to any opportunity for one which could have lasted more than a very short time. Leaving out that remark, we get the impression from his words that his business with Napoleon was transacted in one uninterrupted interview, which was held within the cottage and lasted from forty-five minutes to nearly an hour. This agrees well, so far as the length of the whole interview is concerned, with Forbes, whose figures are : nearly ten minutes within and nearly an hour without. Nor does it differ materially from Sheridan's estimate : a quarter of an hour within and fully an hour without. It may well be that so unimportant an incident as a slight change in the scene of the interview soon passed from Bismarck's memory.

The discrepancy in regard to Bismarck's gestures we may promptly dismiss, and may confidently assume that Forbes is right; for a man is generally ignorant of his own mannerisms, and Bismarck's declaration that "he has no such trick" cannot weigh against what Forbes states that he actually saw. And for a somewhat similar reason we may disregard the Count's denial that he used the German language. A man who is accustomed to converse in two tongues might easily forget which one he used on a given occasion. Madame Fournaise's testimony is unequivocal: he used German inside and she caught a word now and then. The weaver is no less clear: they spoke German outside by an agreement which he overheard, and consequently he could not understand the conversation. Bismarck admits that he did use that tongue, but says it was when he addressed the inmates of the cottage. The remark which the weaver heard the Emperor make outside, "Let us talk in German," would favor either view. It might imply that they had been using the French tongue inside and that the Emperor wished to change it, or that they had been speaking German and he wished to continue it. Bismarck seems to believe that the whole negotiation was conducted in French; but unless we are ready to adopt the improbable view that both the weaver and his wife made independently the same mistake, we must believe that either the business that was transacted in the house or that which was arranged outside

was done in German ; and as Bismarck seems to have forgotten that the interview was divided, it is decidedly the more probable that the same language was used throughout.

Thus far we have had, comparatively speaking, plain sailing, and by using only reasonable suppositions have woven the narratives of the different witnesses into a sufficiently consistent account ; but now we have to deal with statements of the weaver's wife which throw everything into confusion. She virtually declares that there was no interview outside of the house ; for after a conversation of fifteen minutes in the room, Bismarck came clattering out with an ill-humored visage and, mounting his horse, rode off. She could have no doubt as to this incident, for she warned him that the stairs were dangerous ; but he hurried down, nevertheless, so precipitately as to attract her attention — “ like a man of twenty,” she said. Moreover, there would seem to be no ground for the suspicion that she had forgotten that the Emperor was with him at the time, or that, remembering it, she had neglected to mention the circumstance, for she found the former afterwards in the room with his face buried in his hands. Her recollection of this fact was so definite that she even recalled a conversation she had had with him and an act of kindly service that she had rendered him. She supposed, too, that he had remained there some thirty minutes, for she says that in about half an hour Bismarck returned in full dress and preceded the Emperor downstairs.

One almost despairs of fitting these incidents anywhere into the account. If we were at liberty to assume that the Emperor did not follow Bismarck out-of-doors until after some little interval of time, we might plausibly surmise that the brief conversation between Napoleon and the woman occurred during that interval, that the interview outside she had not observed, that the Count's departure took place consequently in her memory as a continuation of his descent after the fifteen-minute interview, and that the detail of his preceding the Emperor downstairs afterwards belongs also to that interview, and is a reminiscence of the suggested fact that there had been some little space between the descent of the Chancellor and that of the Emperor. Indeed, Forbes says the former was a few moments in advance. So, too, in one of the accounts it is stated that chairs were brought out. Had the Emperor remained behind while this was being done? If it was but for half a minute, there would have been time enough for the conversation with Madame Fournaise. But what is to be done with her obvious implication that he remained there above half an hour, and with the fact that his direction to her regarding the blinds shows that he expected to stay some time? Her story is stated to have been told "while the events were fresh in her memory." Still, she had forgotten the interview out-of-doors; or, if she knew nothing about it, she had failed to remember that the time it lasted had intervened between Bismarck's

descent from the first floor and his departure. Did she unwittingly add that time to the minute or less which the Emperor might conceivably have spent in the room after Bismarck left it? And was her association of the Chancellor in full dress with the descent of the Emperor a confusion of two chronologically separate incidents? We should suppose, though we cannot be sure, that Napoleon's pathetic remark to her and the incident of the coins would have aided her recollection in this matter.

Or is there a hiatus in Forbes's narrative? Did Napoleon enter that room twice? There are at least twenty minutes during which he disappears from the account. He came out of the house at 7.20, says Forbes, and had an outdoor conversation which lasted nearly an hour. That is, it was finished before 8.20. Bismarck took his departure at 8.40, and Napoleon was then outside. He paced to and fro, smoking, or sat with the officers, till 9.15, when he was formally put under guard. But where was he from 8.20 or a little earlier till 8.40? The witnesses do not say. Did he return unobserved to the room and remain there during that time? Did the weaver's wife then find him there and take for granted that he had not been out of the chamber? In her narrative she does not say or even necessarily imply that she went into the apartment as soon as Bismarck left it. Forbes says: "*When she entered the room in which the Emperor was left, she found him,*" etc. If, then, it is supposable that the Emperor eluded the observation

of Forbes long enough to enter the house a second time and spend twenty minutes there, that Madame Fournaise, finding him there and knowing nothing of the interview outside, thought he had been there ever since he first came in, there is nothing in her testimony inconsistent with what is affirmed by the other witnesses except that she believed that Bismarck had ridden away immediately after leaving the chamber, and that he was in full dress when he preceded the Emperor downstairs.

I have been at so much pains to analyze and reconcile this mass of testimony in order to call attention the more forcibly to the difficulties sure to be encountered in sifting the evidence for any complex event. It probably will be conceded that a larger measure of agreement among witnesses than appears in the above accounts is not to be expected in the narratives of an occurrence which involves the movements of an equal number of persons. We may even go further and confidently affirm, in view of the eminent character of those whose statements have just been examined, that the discrepancies in these are abnormally few in number and unusually slight in importance. A larger, or even so large, a degree of correspondence cannot as a rule reasonably be looked for in the accounts of an equally complicated incident given by the same number of persons. If the proof of the surrender of Louis Napoleon should eventually consist solely of the testimony given above, the difficulty with which the various narratives are

harmonized would constitute no valid reason for doubting the occurrence. And, therefore, seeming contradictions among the witnesses to any other event of a like intricacy, if they are of no greater proportionate number and difficulty, cannot rationally be urged against the credibility of the event. This, of course, may be assailed on other grounds; but discrepancies in the accounts, if they are no more serious or striking than those enumerated above, have no weight whatever, for they reflect only the normal character of human testimony, and are inseparable from it.

Now, applying this principle — which I believe to be incontestable — to the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, it becomes manifest that the alleged disagreements among the reporters of that occurrence are less serious and important than those examined above. And even if we accept the latter as representing with sufficient accuracy only the normal amount of variation which is to be expected in human testimony in a parallel case, the discrepancies in the accounts of the resurrection are fewer in number than was to have been anticipated; nor would the credibility of the event have been impaired even if they had been somewhat more numerous and difficult. Such as they are, they furnish no more reason to doubt that it occurred than those above cited would afford twenty centuries from now for questioning the traditional account of Louis Napoleon's surrender.

It may be worth while for us to examine them in detail with the above-mentioned fact in mind.

The persons whose movements or words are chronicled are the risen Saviour, Mary Magdalene, "the other Mary" (Matthew), Salome (Mark), Joanna and other women unnamed (Luke), the guard at the tomb, Peter, John, and two men in dazzling apparel. The witnesses are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the author of the Appendix to Mark. We have thus an event of startling magnitude, involving the movements of more persons than are concerned in the narrative of Napoleon's surrender, and related, like that, by four principal reporters and by others whose testimony is briefer. Is it as easy to reconcile the discrepancies in this account as in the other? If so, they cannot of themselves be said to cast any shadow of suspicion on the general veracity of the narrative.

They may be best brought out by following each detail of the story through the parallel accounts.

1. The Women who came to the Tomb. — Matthew says there were two, whom he names; Mark that there were those two and another; Luke, those two, another who was not the third one mentioned by Mark, and still others whose names he does not give. John mentions only Mary Magdalene, agreeing, in this regard, with the Appendix.

Now, in no case is it expressly affirmed in any of the accounts that no women were present except those mentioned by the writer; nor, indeed, is it even necessarily implied that such was the fact,

except in John's account of the interview of Jesus with Mary Magdalene. There is, in one case, a distinct intimation to the contrary. For example, the Fourth Gospel says that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb (the first time), but mentions no companion ; yet when she makes her report to Peter and John immediately after she says,¹ "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and *we* know not (οὐκ οἶδαμεν) where they have laid him," — a hint that the evangelist was aware that there had been at least one other with her. It is to be noted that we have no such difficulties in this connection as are created by General Sheridan's persistent denial that there were any officers in the carriage but the two whom he mentioned. The discrepancies, if they can be so called, are rather to be classed with his failure to mention the three mounted officers who undoubtedly followed the Emperor.

2. The Time of their Arrival. — Matthew says they came "as it began to dawn." Mark : "very early," "when the sun was risen." Luke : "at early dawn." John : "early, while it was yet dark" (*i. e.*, Mary Magdalene). Now the expressions used by three of the evangelists are substantially harmonious, and the Appendix is not inconsistent with them. Mark's specification, however, "when the sun was risen," is a discrepancy ; but it no more disagrees with the others than it does with his own designation of the time as "very early." The real difficulty, therefore, is not to

¹ John xx, 2.

harmonize Mark with the others, but to determine just what he means. The fact that the two discrepant notes of time occur in the same sentence precludes all suspicion that they were not both intentionally used. A plausible explanation would be that some of the women reached the tomb later than others, and that Mark has preserved a reminiscence of that fact. His ambiguity, however, removes his statement from the list of discrepancies which can be confidently pronounced to be such.

3. The Earthquake and the Guard. — Matthew seems to imply that the earthquake took place while the women were at the tomb, that they saw the angel roll away the stone, that the guard were present during their conversation with him, and that it took place outside the tomb (“*Come, see the place where the Lord lay,*” xxviii. 6), while he was sitting on the stone. Mark says the women found the stone rolled away, and that they had a conversation with a young man in a white robe in the sepulchre. Luke also says that they found the stone removed, and that while they stood perplexed, apparently within the tomb, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel and spoke to them. John records that Mary Magdalene found the stone taken away, but mentions no angels until her second visit, when she saw two. In none of the accounts except that of Matthew is the earthquake mentioned, or the impression given that the soldiers were at the grave when the women arrived.

If the First Gospel really necessitates the con-

clusion that the moving of the stone was conceived by Matthew to have occurred after the women had reached the tomb, and that their interview with the angel was held in the presence of the cowering guard, this account is evidently not in agreement with any of the others. And that such was Matthew's understanding of the facts finds countenance in the emphasis placed by the angel on the personal pronoun, "Fear not ye" (*μὴ φοβείσθε ὑμεῖς*), which suggests a tacit reference to others present who were in fear. In that case the evangelist may have welded together two sets of incidents by ignoring the interval of time which separated them, — an error which would be comparable with the omission by Madame Fournaise of the outdoor interview, and by Bismarck, in one of his accounts, of the change in the scene of the conversation from the inside to the outside of the cottage, with the result, in both cases, that disconnected events were run together. The failure of the other evangelists to mention the earthquake and the terror of the soldiers would constitute no disagreement, but would simply indicate that the First Gospel begins with a detail which belongs to a little earlier point of time than that at which the others commence.

4. The Angels. — Matthew, as has been said, seems to have supposed that the women talked with a single angel outside the tomb, Mark differing only by assigning the conversation to the interior. The words used by the apparition in the two ac-

counts show the incident to be one and the same. Luke, however, says two men stood by them, though evidently a little later, *i. e.*, “while they stood perplexed.” John mentions none in connection with Mary Magdalene’s first visit, but specifies two when she came the second time, — a different event altogether.

There is really no contradiction here ; for not only does the smaller number not necessarily exclude the larger, as shown in the example above, but it is quite conceivable that one of the mysterious visitors may have been seen by some of the party who were not present when the other appeared.

A more serious difficulty is created by the fact that while Matthew, Mark, and Luke convey the impression that Mary Magdalene was one of those to whom the angel or angels first appeared, John constrains us to believe that she was not. According to his account, when she saw that the stone had been taken away, she came running to Peter and John with the words, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.” No hint here of a resurrection reported by angel visitors. So, too, when she returned to the grave and saw the two figures in white sitting within, she seems not to have surmised their true nature. At any rate, if she had seen them and heard their message on a previous occasion, she must have known what explanation they had given of the disappearance of the body, and would hardly have answered their question, as she did, by ex-

pressing ignorance of what they had already told her.

The discrepancy, however, may be plausibly explained by supposing John's narrative to contain an accurate version of an incident which the other evangelists relate more loosely. It is quite credible that they, knowing that Mary Magdalene had been among the first at the tomb, took for granted that she was present at the first interview with the angels, when, in point of fact, she left her companions as soon as she saw that the stone had been moved, and was not present when that interview took place, probably within the tomb. Her separation from the party would have been an incident of so little importance that it might well have escaped the notice of authors who may have cared only to give a general outline of events without troubling themselves about such minute details. It was an occurrence that might well have been overlooked in an account involving the movements of an ever-changing group of persons, and has its counterpart in the possible fact suggested above,—that the Emperor Napoleon had entered the cottage a second time and was within doors during a part of the time that Archibald Forbes supposed he was outside.

5. The Words of the Angels. — Matthew and Mark are here in substantial agreement. Luke's report also is of the same general tenor. His most important divergence is his expansion of Matthew's, "He is risen, as he said" into, he "is

risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." In other words, he quotes the saying referred to by Matthew. This may be, as some suppose, of the nature of an editorial amplification. Or does Luke report a speech which was addressed to a second party of the women? The true reading of Luke xxiv. 8-10 ("And they remembered his words, and returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James: *and the other women* with them told these things unto the apostles") would lend some color to the suspicion that the angels spoke to two different groups of auditors, who reported to the disciples in quick succession. The fact that Luke alone preserves the impressive interrogatory, "Why seek ye among the dead him that liveth?" would harmonize with that idea; though it could not, in any event, be regarded as a disagreement. It might be merely an additional detail which the other writers had forgotten, and would be comparable with the fact, preserved by Madame Fournaise alone, that the Emperor entered the cottage because he was unwilling to pass through the German soldiers. The allusion to Galilee has a different setting in all three accounts. So the words, "I have told you," in Matthew, and "as he said unto you," in Mark, seem to be — especially in

the Greek — different reminiscences of the same remark ; but such discrepancies affect no important fact and are of no account.

6. The Women and the Disciples. — Matthew says that they, the two Marys, ran to bring the disciples word, but leaves us nothing more than a presumption that they carried out their purpose. Mark reports that they and another were directed by the angel to make known to the disciples what had occurred, but that they said nothing to any one, being afraid. What modifying statements, if any, followed, of course we do not know ; but, as it stands, the Second Gospel gives us to understand that they made no report. If, therefore, Matthew and Mark contained all the information we have on this point, we could not be certain that there was any disagreement between them. Luke, however, makes it clear that of the five or more women introduced into his account some at least delivered their message. John and the Appendix omit the episode.

We cannot state very positively that there is any actual discrepancy here, because the only record which suggests one is mutilated at a critical place. It does not seem quite probable that Mark's account, if we had the whole of it, would favor the idea that all the women disobeyed the command of the angel for any great length of time. We can only be sure, under the circumstances, that Mark would have us believe that they or those of them whom he had in mind at first told nobody.

7. The First Appearance of the Risen Saviour.

— Matthew, the Appendix, and John agree that it was to Mary Magdalene. Paul mentions no appearances to any women, harmonizing in this particular with Luke, who records first the appearance to Cleopas and his companion, though leaving it doubtful whether there had not been an earlier one to Peter (xxiv. 34). Paul also mentions Cephas (Peter) first in his list of those who had beheld the risen Christ; but neither he nor Luke expressly states that Mary Magdalene had not seen him first. Now whether we should be justified in suspecting that the two writers last named had reason to believe that an appearance of the risen Saviour to a woman would not be likely to impress favorably their Gentile readers, may be doubtful; but it is very evident that their failure to mention it cannot be cited as proof that they were ignorant of it. It cannot confidently be classed, therefore, as a disagreement with other accounts.

The only real discrepancies, then, in this connection, would seem to be Matthew's supposition that Jesus met Mary Magdalene as she was returning from her first visit to the sepulchre, and that the other Mary was with her at the time. That she was alone and was making a second visit to the tomb when she first saw the risen Lord, John makes sufficiently probable. She speaks in the singular number, not in the plural, as on the previous occasion, when we may suppose that she had the other Mary in mind. This error of Matthew, then, would be of the same order as the one already attributed to him,

and would be simply another illustration of a tendency to ignore dividing-lines between events.

× But admitting that the interviews of Jesus with the two Marys in the First Gospel and with Mary Magdalene in the Fourth are the same incident, it might be thought that there is a contradiction between the two accounts in another particular. Matthew says, "They [the two] came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him;" but Christ's remark to Mary Magdalene in the Fourth Gospel, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto the Father," is commonly supposed to intimate that she was not permitted to lay hands on him at all. But it is doubtful if the Greek favors, or at any rate necessitates, this view. We should expect in that case an aorist, — μή μου ἅψη, perhaps (Colossians ii. 21). But the direction is in the present tense (μή μου ἅπτου), and might be rendered, "Do not be handling me." The grammatical construction is such as would be likely to be used if Jesus would deter Mary from continuing to do what she had begun to do, as may be gathered from such examples as "Fear not" (Luke i. 13), "Trouble not yourselves" (Acts xx. 10), and others. Christ's command, when thus conceived, is not inconsistent with the parallel passage in Matthew, but presupposes some such action on the part of Mary Magdalene as is there attributed to the two Marys. Aside from the number of the women supposed to be concerned, there is, then, no disagreement between the accounts except that in

one Jesus says, "All hail!" (χαίρετε) and in the other simply "Mary," which is of no importance.

8. Peter and John. — The only important variation in the narratives of the conduct of these two disciples is in the fact that Luke states that Peter went to the tomb and mentions no companion, while John says that he and Peter went together. But it seems evident enough that Luke knew that Peter was not alone, for he represents Cleopas and his companion as saying, "And certain (τινες, plural) of them that were with us went to the tomb," etc. (xxiv. 24). Even if the omission had been made by the evangelist from ignorance, it would have been of no consequence.

It will not be necessary to compare the accounts of all the other appearances. They create no difficulty, except that in Matthew's account of an appearance to the eleven the remark, "but some doubted," might seem inconsistent with the fact that earlier appearances to the eleven are mentioned by other evangelists which might be supposed to have removed the possibility of doubt. But this clause may be a reminiscence of Thomas's doubts, or of Mark xvi. 14, in which case the error of the evangelist was in supposing that Galilee rather than Jerusalem was the scene of the incident. Such a mistake would have an important bearing on the question of authorship, but would be insignificant in other respects. Or, is it possible that the interview Matthew had in mind was the one with the five hundred brethren which

is mentioned by Paul? Alford shows that in the Greek the phrase "but some doubted" does not necessarily mean some of the eleven.

Now it will have been observed that all of these discrepancies relate to subordinate details of the narrative and affect no important fact. Moreover, it is possible to disentangle the seemingly conflicting statements and, without resorting to any improbable hypotheses, to weave them into a reasonable and self-consistent whole. The order of events, then, might be supposed to have been about as follows:—

The angel rolls away the stone in sight of the guard, who fall to the earth in terror and then, after he enters the tomb, perhaps, desert their posts in a panic.

At that time the women, in two or three bands, were on their way to the sepulchre, Matthew erroneously supposing that one of the groups had arrived early enough to witness the above incident.

The first who reached the ground were Mary Magdalene and at least one companion. She goes near enough to see that the grave has been opened and that the body is not there, and then hastens back to inform the disciples, without having seen the mysterious visitor within the tomb.

Another party arrive and enter the grave, see the angel and hear his words, and also hurry away to notify the disciples. They are hardly gone when perhaps a third party reach the ground, find two angels now in the sepulchre, receive a com-

munication substantially the same as had been made to their predecessors, and, in their turn, flee to the city.

Mary Magdalene meanwhile reports to the disciples that the body is gone. Peter and John start at once for the grave, Mary following them. The other women had not yet arrived with their story of the apparitions, as I infer from the remark made in reference to the two disciples after they had found the tomb empty: "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." (John xx. 9.) This statement would hardly have been made if they had received the message of the angels. Having found that the body was really gone, they return home.

Meanwhile the other women have made their report to the rest of the disciples, — though some may have fled to their homes too frightened to tell what they had seen; but their hearers are incredulous.

Mary Magdalene reaches the grave after the two disciples are gone, having been unable to keep up with them. She sees two white figures within, but having heard of no apparitions, she does not seem to have divined their true character. She turns, recognizes Jesus, seizes him by the feet in worship, is checked by him, and is sent with a message to the disciples, which Cleopas and his companion do not hear, having left the city immediately after the return of the other women.

It would thus appear that throughout this whole involved narrative there are no discrepancies which

cannot be removed by suppositions which a familiarity with the normal character of human testimony will show to be both natural and reasonable.

A tendency to concatenate separate events, failures to keep track of the units of an ever-changing company, and, as a result, erroneous groupings of its members on various occasions, a concentration of the attention on the movements of one or two individuals to the exclusion of all others present, ascriptions of acts to a whole class of persons which were done by only a portion of them, specifications of time in connection with one stage of a somewhat protracted event which belong to a different one, — these are common characteristics of human testimony. They are to be expected in reports of every intricate event, and afford in themselves no reason for doubting that it took place. It is easier to reconcile the conflicting testimony for the resurrection of Christ than it is to perform a similar operation on the evidence collated by Archibald Forbes in regard to the surrender of the Emperor Napoleon. There is no step in the whole process that is attended with so much difficulty as is inseparable from any attempt to intercalate Madame Fournaise's precise recollection of her first conversation with him into the narratives of the other witnesses. And the report of that surrender which will go down to posterity will rest upon a somewhat artificial and suspicious adjustment of divergent accounts, which can hardly be affirmed with truth of the story of the resurrection of Christ.

CHAPTER VII

INSPIRATION

IF we are justified in regarding the resurrection of Christ as an historical event, we are compelled to adopt one conclusion of no little importance. It will be impossible for us to escape the conviction that God has provided some way of acquainting the world with all it needs to know in order to derive from that event all the benefit it was designed to impart. It cannot be supposed that God would do things by halves. We cannot persuade ourselves that he would make so vast a departure from his normal course of action as the resurrection would involve, and then allow the purpose he had in view to be foiled through a lack of those who would have the ability to interpret it. It cannot be doubted that such a career as is ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels means, if the account is trustworthy, something of immeasurable value to the human race. We must feel that the infinite Reason which is behind all phenomena has manifested itself in that history as in nothing else which has happened on the earth. The inference will be irresistible that such a work of divine providence would not have been wrought unless there was in

it a lesson that was indispensable to the welfare of mankind, and unless God intended to provide a means by which it would be made sure that the lesson would not be lost. In other words, by as much as we are inclined to admit that Jesus rose from the dead, by so much are we constrained to believe that the original records of that event are free from important errors, and that those to whom was committed the duty of proclaiming it did not seriously obscure its meaning.

What is true in this regard of the resurrection of Christ is equally so in respect to the other miracles recorded in the Bible. If they are viewed as supernatural occurrences brought about by the Almighty for a special object, they imply the existence of competent interpreters; for without these they are useless. They must be supplemented by such human utterances as will bring them into practical relation with the human understanding, or they will represent merely a fruitless expenditure of divine force. A miracle which conveys no adequate truth is wasted. Coincidentally with every exceptional display of divine power for a religious end, we must believe that an influence has been providentially exerted upon some human minds which will render them competent to unfold the meaning of what has taken place.

Nor is it only the believers in Christian supernaturalism who are compelled to adopt such an inference. The deist, the disciple of natural religion, must do the same. If God is manifesting

himself in the normal course of events, it cannot be doubted that he has included among the educational influences which he has brought to bear on humanity some method of imparting to it the knowledge of himself which it needs for its complete spiritual development. As it seems to be his will that the human race shall be instructed, in the main, through the agency of its own superior minds, it must be taken for granted that there will be some among these which will be able to grasp the profound facts of the natural revelation. There is presupposed an ability on the part of at least some men to understand what he is trying to teach and to communicate it with sufficient accuracy to others.

Now, if we ask how it has come about that there have been human minds which were equal to so great a responsibility, how it happens that there are always those in the world who are competent to initiate their fellow men into some, at least, of the mysteries of God, we have caught a glimpse of the problem which the theory of inspiration was framed to solve.

The human mind is a mystery. Psychology can, at the best, only describe its workings without being able to explain them. The philosophers who refer all mental action to successive modifications of brain tissue and the physician who includes sin and crime in the pathology of the nervous system have, if they are right, only pushed the mystery one step further back. What the

brain tissue or the nervous system is, how mere cellular changes can produce the phenomena of thought or emotion, they do not pretend to know. These are questions to which the oracles of science are dumb.

Every one who notes with any care the operations of his own mind is likely to become convinced that it is, to a very large extent, automatic in its action. It is not a servant to whom he can say, "Go," or "Come," with any assurance that he will always be obeyed. Thought and feeling, although they may be in a measure controlled by the volitions, are essentially independent of them, and often decline to be ruled by them. Memory sometimes refuses obstinately to open its records, no matter how much it may be coaxed. Emotions that are appropriate to certain experiences will sometimes fail to manifest themselves in spite of every exertion of the will. The reasoning faculty is frequently baffled by problems which it is convinced it ought to be able to solve. The poet, the inventor, the philosopher, when he sits down to think, can never know in advance that ideas which will be of any value to him will suggest themselves. Thoughts frame themselves within him spontaneously. They rise to the surface of consciousness like bubbles in an effervescing liquid. He can only watch them and select from them what he can use ; or, at the best, he can stir up and stimulate the mind so that they may rise faster. No small part of his labor will consist in

keeping down or discarding those which are foreign to his purpose, and which make their way into consciousness unbidden.

There are circumstances, however, which cannot always be accurately defined beforehand in which mental action while thus operating yields highly satisfactory and even abnormal results. A train of thought enters the mind which is of such a character as to astonish and delight him to whom it comes. It seems to have entirely mastered him. He cannot, without difficulty, control or check it if he will. It will not suffer him to sleep, perhaps. And when it has run its course he reviews it with something like amazement. It is so far above the familiar level of his mental operations that it does not seem to have emanated from himself. He accords to it the admiration which he is wont to bestow on the intellectual achievements of another person. As he recalls it in after years, he is puzzled to understand how he could ever have been equal to it.

Or take the case of a public speaker. When he faces his audience for the first time it is with misgivings which, for a few moments, seem to have been abundantly justified. He expresses himself awkwardly ; he is oppressed by the presence of so many people ; he is sure that his speech will prove a failure. But gradually a new power comes upon him. His stammering utterance gives place to an easy fluency. Language seems to have placed itself at his command. He is conscious that he is

holding the attention and swaying the minds of all present. He wonders at himself. He cannot account for the eloquence and the facility of diction which are so impressing the listeners. The ease and confidence with which he is speaking are new and strange to him. He is sure that he has never before thought so clearly or expressed himself so well. He is aware that in a private conversation he would be incapable of saying so forcibly or at all what he is now uttering with so little effort in public. A situation which he would have supposed would embarrass him extremely has had precisely the opposite effect, and has proved an unwonted stimulus and a source of strength. Too feeble, as he had deemed himself, to express himself effectively in the parlor, he has become an orator on the platform.

Such experiences as these are very common, and afford a key or clue to the meaning of inspiration. The man who thus outdoes himself, as the expression is, will probably say that he must have been inspired. If the intellectual or emotional effect produced by him on others is recognized by them as unusual or abnormal, they will account for it in the same way. In doing so they may find it hard or impossible to define their terms. They may use the word "inspiration" very loosely and vaguely. But the fact that they use it at all betrays a consciousness that it expresses something which can be indicated in no other way. When the quality or effect of a literary, musical, or

oratorical performance surpasses noticeably what experience has taught men to expect under like circumstances, the result is ascribed by them to inspiration.

There are phenomena in the operations of the physical nature of a man which are analogous to those just described, and suggest an explanation of them. For example, he starts to run a race, and, in a few minutes perhaps, becomes exhausted. He presses on, however, panting and weary, hardly able to drag one foot after the other, falling far behind his rivals, almost ready to give up the contest in despair, when suddenly a new power comes to his rescue. His fatigue is gone, he breathes easily, he feels almost as fresh and vigorous as when he left the starting-line. He swiftly overtakes his competitors. The exertions he is making have become pleasant instead of painful. And when he has reached the goal he is almost in condition to begin another race. What has happened to him? He will probably say that he has "got his second wind." A physiologist would explain that he had at first been using only a portion of his lungs, and that his sudden accession of vigor was due to the fact that he had at length begun to inflate them fully. He unconsciously brought into action his reserves. He unwittingly tapped the sources of an hitherto unused power. His excitement and unwonted exertions aroused a dormant energy within him which seemed to him abnormal because it had been so seldom exercised.

Now it would not be much amiss etymologically as well as physiologically to call this experience a physical inspiration; and it suggests an explanation of what is known as inspiration in popular speech. When the latent powers of the human mind are brought into operation, when the full vigor of its creative faculties has been aroused, when, as a result of some extraordinary stimulus, the whole of the mental resources of the man show themselves, he is said, in common parlance, to be inspired. Colloquially speaking, his soul has "got its second wind."

Inspiration, as thus conceived, may be said to be of different kinds when considered in reference to the various spheres in which it shows itself, but essentially it is always the same. The inspiration of Shakespeare manifests itself in an almost superhuman insight into human nature, and a marvelous aptitude for literary expression; that of Raphael and every preëminent artist is exhibited in a striking realism of pictorial effect or in a matchless skill in using dead marble so as to produce the impression of actual life; that of Demosthenes and all great orators is evinced in a peculiar success in employing argument and persuasion so as to control the reason and the feelings of an audience and to sway the wills of men in predetermined directions. Science has its inspirations, as when a Newton leaps to the height of a grand generalization. So has mechanics, as when a sudden intuition reveals to an inventor a possible sew-

ing-machine or telephone. So has statesmanship, as appeared when the Constitution of the United States was framed, and an instrument came into existence which was able to reconcile the jarring opinions of the time and to endure the strain of a century of political antagonisms and conflict. In each of these cases the human mind seemed to exceed its normal powers because its unused resources were called into action ; and viewing the process in the light of its results and its circumstances, men call it an inspiration.

Many of those who admit the inspiration of the Bible, or of some parts of it, have in mind only a literary inspiration. They are impressed by the noble poetry of the psalmist, the eloquent diction of the prophet, or the faithful delineation of character by the evangelist. The prayer of Habakkuk, the drama of Job, the wisdom of Proverbs, the Sermon on the Mount, Paul's panegyric on Love, they concede to be inspired, while regarding them from merely an æsthetic or a literary point of view. There is in these and many other passages of Scripture an intellectual power or a literary music which they recognize as of an exceptionally high order, and the inspiration which they acknowledge does not differ in any respect from that which they attribute to Goethe or Virgil.

And beyond all controversy there is much inspiration of this sort in the Bible. There is no grander or more beautiful literature than is to be found in that wonderful book. The human mind

has never winged a loftier flight than has been achieved by some of the sacred authors. For wealth of imagery, for eloquence of utterance, for majestic simplicity, for condensed energy of expression, for beauty of thought, there are large portions of the Scriptures which are unsurpassed and, indeed, unequaled. But we are accustomed to distinguish the inspiration of the sacred volume from that of every other in at least one respect: it represents to our minds the profoundest and truest insight into the mystery of human life and destiny, into the philosophy of existence and the ultimate reason of things, that the human intellect has ever obtained. Inspiration, therefore, as a theological term, may be defined as human genius applied with exceptional success to religious discovery and instruction, the profoundest entrance of human faculties into the realm of spiritual truth. The same mental elevation which has given the world many of its best ideas and facts in various departments of human research is called inspiration, in the religious sense of the word, when it has penetrated the unseen world and solved, to any important extent, the problems relating to it.

It is not, therefore, necessarily in itself an abnormal endowment. Many a man who never thinks of himself as inspired has experiences which make it possible for him to understand what inspiration in the theological sense is, and some, perhaps, to which the term itself, at least in some relative sense, can properly be applied. As many a musician has

moments of exceptional creative power in which he is able to form some idea of the influences that wrought upon the mind of some great composer while producing his masterpiece, and as many a public speaker has epochs of intellectual and emotional elevation in which he can appreciate, in some measure, the mental forces which gave birth to some immortal oration, so there is no lack of those whose religious experiences have been at times so peculiar and so luminous as to suggest, though perhaps faintly, the processes by which the men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost obtained their marvelous spiritual light and confidence. In other words, inspiration is only a phenomenal, or at least a special, development of a power which resides potentially in every human mind.

If we would inquire how the Hebrew people happened to produce the manifestations of this power which have rendered the inspiration of its sacred teachers so unique and so permanently influential, we shall need to bear in mind that other nations have developed exceptional creative aptitudes in other directions. It is to Greece that the world owes its conception of artistic beauty and its philosophical trends; to Rome it is indebted for the essentials of its jurisprudence and the spirit of organization. It is commonly said that the Hebrews had a genius for religion. If what is meant is that as a race they were specially fitted to grapple with religious problems, to trace politi-

cal effects back to their original moral causes, and to shed light on the seeming contradictions that mysteriously occur in human life, the statement is doubtless true. No other race has so profoundly influenced human thought along these lines. The utterances of a few men in an obscure corner of the world are the source from which three prominent religions are still deriving much of their life. They are the origin of and even the authority for moral conceptions and beliefs on which modern civilization is largely founded.

It is not so easy to explain how this remarkable people came to be so endowed. But even if we set aside those portions of its written records to the historicity of which the higher criticism demurs, the fact still stands out with sufficient clearness that the history of the Hebrew race is, for the most part, that of a long struggle between a monotheistic conception of religion and various polytheistic tendencies. Starting out with a lofty, though perhaps somewhat crude and anthropomorphic idea of Jehovah, they were able to verify and enlarge it by national experiences which covered many centuries. As an individual who would know God by inductive experience must begin with the hypothesis that the Christian conception of the Deity is correct in order that he may have something by which to explain his religious experiences, so the Jews as a nation began with a conception of the Supreme Being which they could test by their national experiences, and by which they could in-

terpret these. They seem to have been seldom, if ever, during the formative years of their national life, without teachers who made it their mission to point out the religious meaning of events, to associate national reverses and successes with corresponding changes in the popular attitude towards Jehovah. In this way the race was able to perform on a large scale the induction described in an earlier chapter, by which any one in our own day may arrive at an indestructible belief in the God of the Christian Scriptures and in an overruling Providence.

The logic of events was ever confirming the prophetic view of the conditions of national success, as the type of character which was most in harmony with it was uniformly justified in the national struggle for existence. Natural selection went hand in hand with prophecy. As has been indicated elsewhere, it eliminated from the national life ideas and practices which were not in accord with the highest monotheistic conceptions. The survival of the fittest, the persistence of the purest religious type, is recognized in what the critics call the unhistorical legends of the Old Testament, and is taught no less clearly in the later annals. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not to mention personages assigned to a still earlier date, represent so many providential preferences of the more to the less religiously susceptible mind. The glory of David's reign was that of a monarch who, more than any other in the line of Jewish kings, was imbued with

the spirit of the national religion. The heresy of the ten tribes disappeared as a Hebrew cult with that section of the nation which had adopted it. The repopulation of Jerusalem by the returning exiles more than four centuries before the Christian era marked a most thorough excision of discordant religious beliefs from the national life, for the personal sacrifice which it involved must have excluded from the movement all save those who were intensely loyal to the old religion. As a result of all these influences polytheism and idolatry were finally weeded out of the faith and religious practice of the whole people.

The concentration of national thought on the one subject of religion which was brought about by the varied experiences of the nation could not fail to produce an unique literature, and it was to be expected that those portions of it which should be preserved by the discrimination and taste of a whole people who had been educated in the manner described would prove to be the most important contribution to religious science that the human race is capable of making. Their experiences had made the Jews not only a race fertile in religious authors, but also a race of capable critics of religious literature, a fact which would have an important bearing on the selection and preservation of their sacred writings. These would represent, therefore, a competent generalization from an almost infinitely diversified national experience, the results of the most protracted, intelligent, and thorough induction

that has ever been employed for the discovery of religious truth.

These experiences and the resulting religious philosophy which had been forced, as it were, upon a whole people by the countless facts of many centuries, found expression in prose and poetry, in history, fiction, and perhaps in myths, in sermons, hymns, and popular maxims. Even the primitive legends and the simple, artless chronicles of this exceptional people show the influence of the dominant, inbred religious idea, for they refer, with an unwavering self-consistency, all events to a single divine Cause, and see in all the vicissitudes of life a confirmation of the same religious philosophy.

It is useless to deny on account of the alleged unhistorical character of certain early traditions and the supposed inaccuracies of later records that such an inspiration is divine. It might be freely admitted that the sacred historians were dependent for their facts on the ordinary sources of historical information ; that they simply wrote the best accounts of their national origin and growth that they could compile from the material within reach ; that their narratives disagree with one another when written from different points of view even as the interpretation of events in American history by a Democratic author might not harmonize with that of a writer with Republican sympathies, — all this might be conceded, and yet the question of inspiration would remain untouched. We get from Prescott a somewhat different idea of the civili-

zation of the Aztecs at the time of the Spanish conquest from that which we obtain from John Fiske. We miss in the latter some of that outward magnificence and material splendor which impart to the history of the author first named so much of the coloring and fascination of a romance; yet, I presume, both writers made use of the same original sources of information. The discrepancy between them which has just been suggested would be due, no doubt, in that case, to a difference in mental tendency, to an unlikeness in their capacity for drawing historical inferences.

So, too, large diversities of statement are to be expected between American and English authors who treat the subject of our Revolutionary War, or between Northern and Southern writers who undertake to explain the political movements which culminated in the war of secession. There is always a personal equation which affects the literary results of such attempts. The inevitable fact that every historian's own mental make-up influences him more or less in his judgment of his authorities, and communicates to the facts which they record a color which will not be of precisely the same shade as that which tinges the conclusions of any other writer, is certain to produce more or less of disagreement even between obviously impartial narratives of the same occurrences. If the writer last named has the correct conception of the Aztec civilization, Prescott might be said to illustrate somewhat that tendency to "idealize" which

is ascribed so often to some of the Old Testament historians. This is not necessarily a tendency to pervert known facts in order to favor a preconceived theory; it may be only an unconscious partiality for such traditionary material as affords the most flattering view of the origin and essential dignity of a kingdom or an organization. The differences between Chronicles and other prophetic books in regard to the original importance of the Levitical order may be a case in point. They might conceivably be due to a diversity of opinion in the interpretation of the same original material, or to a difference in the principles which have governed the selections made from it. In that event they would constitute no objection to the doctrine of inspiration unless this is understood to imply such a divine superintendence of an author's work as insures its accuracy even in unimportant details, instead of such a providential guidance as enables him to use imperfect resources and the best information attainable so as to arrive at correct religious results.

We must not lose sight of the undeniable truth that the Bible recognizes what I have elsewhere called the economy of the supernatural. If effects are wrought by divine power, only so much of this is used as will render natural agencies sufficient. Jesus himself illustrated this fact and indorsed the principle involved in it when he directed that the fragments of the miraculous feasts should be saved, and thus showed that only so much supernatural

energy had been exercised as would serve the present needs of the multitudes and the disciples. The dividing of the Red Sea, according to the Biblical account, was due wholly to natural causes, and was miraculous only in the sense that these carried out an oral command. Special divine aid is not to be excessive in amount. The same law, when applied to inspiration, would lead us to expect only so much of special divine agency as would secure the end in view. If this is conceived to be, in the case now in hand, only the proper religious interpretation of events, such a wasteful impartation of divine knowledge as would encroach upon the province of the secular historian and insure a needless accuracy in unessential details ought not to be looked for.

The so-called prophetic books are not to be viewed as containing a history so much as a philosophy of history. Their inspiration may not imply, and certainly does not consist in, an absolute freedom from errors of every sort, from mistakes in transcribing or selecting the facts derived from earlier documents, but in an inerrant judgment of the deepest meaning of events, in a clear discernment of the law of divine providence, in an ability to point out with courage and precision the profound causes of national or individual success and failure. It is this clear insight into the heart of things which justifies us in ascribing the quality of inspiration to narratives which, when viewed merely with reference to their literary form, might seem monotonous and dry.

This same deep knowledge of cause and effect underlies the prophecies. These may be called as a whole sermons on the conditions of political success, on the laws of national growth and prosperity. There have not been wanting in modern times seers who could forecast with marvelous exactness coming events in the political world. Burke's prediction of the French Revolution is often cited in proof of this fact. Montcalm's¹ description of the effect that the anticipated fall of Quebec would produce on the relations of the American colonies to the mother country will illustrate, whether it be genuine or not, the mental process by which history is written in advance. But the Hebrew prophets commanded a longer perspective than is exhibited in these examples. That inbred racial inspiration which revealed to them the primordial cause of their own national vicissitudes, that penetrating vision which could trace the long succession of political events back to its very source, enabled them to pronounce, generations before the final catastrophe, the fall of cities and empires which were at discord with the eternal facts that are back of governments and of organizations of all kinds. As a builder foretells with certainty the eventual collapse of a warehouse whose walls are out of plumb or whose foundations are not firm, so the seers of the Bible, rooted and grounded as they were in the philosophy of their own history, in the principles on which all permanent society

¹ Carlyle, *Frederick the Great and his Times*.

must rest, felt that there was more of the element of endurance in their own little nation than there was in the great pagan states which overshadowed it in turn. They launched their words of doom against Babylon and Nineveh, against Tyre and Egypt, because they could already see the cracks in the foundation walls of all heathen prosperity, the flaw in the corner-stone of every social edifice which was not built in harmony with what they knew to be the laws of the moral universe.

But did all of their revelations come to them in this way? Was every prediction made by them only an accurate deduction from known facts and laws? Did their trances, their dreams, their seemingly objective visions, only indicate certain mental states in which the logical faculty, their natural skill in reasoning from cause to effect, was abnormally stimulated? Few who have had a deep and varied religious experience would answer these questions affirmatively. Some — perhaps many — would say that spiritual influences had been exerted at times upon themselves, that communications of a religious import had been made to them which could not be referred to the operation of known psychological laws, and they would argue that similar phenomena must have characterized the inspiration of the prophet and the evangelist through whose teachings they have acquired their own spiritual sensitiveness. They would contend that mental suggestions have been made to them at certain critical or important epochs in their

lives which must have emanated from some higher source than could be discovered within themselves, and which bear a marked resemblance, in that respect, to various communications which are said, in the Scriptures, to have been imparted to the men of God.

The answer given to these questions will in the end depend largely on the mental attitude that is assumed towards the miracle. If it is deemed probable that laws pertaining to a higher sphere of influence than falls within the scope of ordinary human experience have produced within the limited range of terrestrial vision effects which may be called, in that sense, supernatural, there will be no objection to believing that knowledge which transcends the normal reach of the intellectual faculties may have found its way into the human mind from the same supernal source. As explained earlier in this chapter, the origin of all thought is a mystery. There is frequently an independence in our ideas which renders them inexplicable by the laws of mental association. The researches of certain psychical investigators are making it more and more evident that there is a mysterious border-land in the human soul where mind unconsciously influences mind, and where suggestions from without are registered. It is certainly conceivable — there are those who would say it is certain — that man is not always so far from God that the voice of the Infinite cannot make itself audible, in some real sense, to his

understanding, that the omniscience of the Most High does not overflow at times into the dry channels of our spiritual ignorance.

But in whatever way inspiration may manifest itself, whether in a phenomenal stimulation of the natural powers or in a direct revelation from God himself, its bearing on human development would seem to be clear. If we feel constrained to believe that the human race is undergoing what I have already referred to as a period of spiritual gestation, in which it is being shaped more and more into the likeness of a parental Character, inspiration is simply one of the forces or influences by which the various features of that Character are being communicated. The history of the human reason is but a record of the different steps by which man has been enabled to understand better and better and to imitate more and more closely the living Ideal which we call God. The final cause of evolution is the production of an organic type which can be educated into a knowledge of its Maker. The changes which have been wrought during the centuries in man's moral standards, the growth of his religious conceptions through the successive stages of fetichism, polytheism, anthropomorphic and spiritual monotheism, only mark an increasing ability on his part to appropriate an objective truth. These repeated modifications and improvements of the ethical and theistic conceptions of mankind are analogous to the changes which take place in a casting while the molten

metal is being poured into the mould. Whatever is absurd in the successive forms which result is due only to the fact that the process is not yet finished.

The mould in which man's religious ideas are being formed is itself not yet done. It is being slowly wrought out by the education of the understanding through various natural agencies, by the gradual preparation of the mind for the reception of spiritual truths. The evolution of religion is the twofold operation of making the mould and filling it as far as made. It is the providential development of mental capacities in reference to transcendent religious facts, and the simultaneous recognition of those facts according to the measure of the capacities already produced. Man, therefore, does not create his religion, but appropriates it through the medium of a growing receptivity for it. God is not merely a concept which has been developed by numberless ages of human experience; he is an external reality who has been shaping that experience so that it will eventuate in a mind which can entertain the concept. The countless splashes of light which waver and glimmer on the troubled surface of a pond, becoming fewer and fewer in number as the ripples die down, and aggregating themselves into larger and larger patches of brightness, till at last they coalesce into a single reflected image of the moon, do not create that luminary. It was its own previous existence that made them possible and called them into

being. So the fluctuating opinions of the human race, which have given birth to the multitudinous forms of polytheism, out of which has arisen at last the belief in one God of surpassing moral splendor, did not originate the character ascribed to him. It was this, rather, that caused the confused sparkles of religious illumination in the minds of men who were not yet able to reflect a spiritual, self-consistent monotheistic idea.

That the crowning utterances of Hebrew inspiration are in harmony with the immediately foregoing statements cannot be doubted. The highest prize within the range of human achievement, according to the teachings of Jesus, is eternal life; and this, he says, is in part, "to know thee, the only true God." Paul sums up his own philosophy of universal history in the thought that the final cause, the providential meaning, of the creation and distribution of the human race is "that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him." And Joel, according to the obvious meaning of one of his prophecies, a meaning which Peter also adopts, foresaw a time when inspiration was to be a general human accomplishment, when the seer, the teacher of divine mysteries, would not be, as under the imperfect light of the old dispensation, an exceptional man, a prophet of a type that might be wanting in the world for hundreds of years, but only an example of what any man might become in his own sphere when the human mind should be universally so developed that God

could pour out his spirit on all flesh, when sons and daughters, old men and young men, would alike catch the light of divine truth which at first had rested only on the widely scattered summits of a few exceptionally developed minds. And every deep religious conviction which overcomes a demoralizing doubt, outstrips slow proof, and begins to shape a life into likeness to the Christian ideal, may be but an illustration, though perhaps on a relatively small scale, of that which is most important in inspiration as already described; while revivals of religion which bring hundreds of people of every grade of mental culture into the Christian Church, and the widespread religious confidence which the learned skeptic contemns because it persistently refuses to see in his arguments a proof of its own unreasonableness, may be but so much evidence that the human race has at last been developed far enough to receive indispensable religious intuitions from the Divine Spirit himself.

Revelation is a correlative term. It necessarily implies an ability on the part of mankind to understand what is revealed. A revelation which cannot be comprehended is a self-contradiction. If we believe, therefore, that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, we cannot if we would deny that the human race has been furnished with inspiration enough, whether natural or supernatural, to get possession of the truths which have thus been disclosed. Consequently, it will be irrational for us not to believe that the original records

through which his teachings have been handed down to later generations, and apart from which no knowledge of these teachings could be had, are that revelation, or at least contain it in such a form that it may be ascertained. Now since there is no test by which it can be determined what the records teach except the consensus of human opinion, it will be rational for us to assume that the beliefs which have been held by the vast majority of Christians, or rather the element in them which has remained constant from the beginning down to the present time, represents, at least approximately, the truth which Christ has brought into the world. The same logical necessity which leaves the believer in Christian supernaturalism no escape from the conclusion that men have been raised up to interpret correctly the miracles of the gospel constrains him to believe that the historic and general understanding of the interpretation is essentially correct, since otherwise there has been practically a failure to interpret, and the object of the miracle has been defeated. The widespread inspiration which Peter claims has come upon the church is nowhere more likely to exist than in those views of the nature and substantial teaching of Christianity to which the church as a whole have clung from the beginning; for that they are intrinsically sound is a necessary corollary, as has just been shown, from the theory of inspiration, and the truth of that theory is involved in the acceptance of the miracles.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the word "inspiration," in its theological sense, denotes something of relatively small practical value, something of philosophical or theoretic rather than of vital interest. It is of vastly more importance that a theological belief should be true than that it should be derived from inspiration. In other words, a truth is no truer because it is inspired. The theory of inspiration merely explains how certain facts were discovered, or renders more credible certain teachings which the average understanding cannot verify. Truth, in whatever way it is found, is greater than inspiration. If, for example, the writings of the Jewish historians, the four Gospels, and the Book of Acts are believed, on general grounds, to be reliable, if we are convinced, on the same grounds, that they relate with substantial accuracy the facts of which they profess to treat, little, if anything, is to be gained by ascribing to the respective authors any supernatural divine guidance. In the last analysis we shall believe them, if at all, not because they are commonly held to be inspired, but because we are satisfied that they are true. In other words, attacks on any particular theory of inspiration, or denials of the inspiration of particular scriptural books, have no necessary tendency, even if they are not refuted, to undermine the foundations of Christian belief. The alternative yet remains that, even if the books are not in the technical sense inspired, they may nevertheless be true. That certain men were so devoted

to the service of God, so dominated by their sense of the greatness of his character and of the duty they owed to him, that they were impelled to use the greatest care and observe the utmost fidelity in recording facts pertaining to his dealings with mankind is, perhaps, all that need be said in support of the historic credibility of some of the books of the Bible ; but whether this mental and moral attitude was due to inspiration or not is almost immaterial. If we believe that these men were inspired by God, we shall, of course, not doubt that they maintained such an attitude ; but if we are convinced on other grounds that they were honest and truthful persons, who had abundant opportunities to know what they affirmed, and a sincere desire to relate facts as they were, we shall accept their testimony with equal readiness, whether we believe that their ability and integrity came to them in the ordinary way, or were the fruits of a special divine inspiration.

CHAPTER VIII

DOGMATIC CHRISTIANITY

It is very common nowadays to hear Christian dogmas spoken of disparagingly, if not with contempt. It is very frequently assumed that they constitute no essential part of the Christian religion, but can be separated from it without injury to it and even to its advantage. The ethical teachings of Jesus, illustrated and emphasized as they are by his example, are supposed by many to be all that is important in the gospel. Persistent efforts are made to bring Christianity back to the words of Jesus alone, and to eliminate from it even the influence of Paul's doctrinal discussions. It is averred that even within the covers of the New Testament we have documents which gave a trend to the development of Christianity that its founder did not contemplate, and which transformed what was originally only a pure and spiritual moral code into a difficult and misleading religious philosophy.

But we have learned in quite recent times to see in the continued existence of anything a proof of its utility. Darwin and his followers have taught us to believe that the various organs and traits of

living beings fail to disappear only because they are valuable to their possessors in the struggle for existence. Evolutionists hold this law to be universal in its scope, and would not hesitate to quote it in explaining the origin and persistence of an idea or a belief. We can count with safety on their support when we affirm that if the ethics of Jesus have become associated with certain doctrinal creeds, with philosophical statements of belief in which a constant element finds expression in ever-changing outward forms, it is because these creeds and articles of faith have in them something which has proved advantageous to the Christian religion.

Christianity on its ethical side is more likely to intimidate and discourage than to stimulate. The standard of virtue which it upholds might be called, without much exaggeration, superhuman. The single commandment in which it sums up the law and the prophets is so purely ideal from our present point of view as to seem impracticable and visionary. To love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, and one's neighbor as one's self, though well calculated to win admiration as an ethical conception, is not likely to be regarded as one that can be attained in practice. It is not so very long ago that the American people heard the Golden Rule boldly stigmatized as "an iridescent dream" in the sphere of politics. The Sermon on the Mount arouses a kind of enthusiasm in persons of all grades of moral culture, but viewed as a set

of precepts for actual daily conduct it can hardly be said, as a general rule, to be taken seriously. Let it be inexorably prescribed by social reformers as the one law of universal and every-day duty, and it is more likely to be greeted with a dubious shrug of the shoulders than to enlist men in an earnest effort to obey it. To exercise such a rigid control over the thoughts as it enjoins, to assume such a dominion over the natural inclinations as will manifest itself in acts of kindness done even to those that hate us, to be perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect, are large obligations to impose on men who, according to the current philosophy, are but the paragons of the brute creation, and who, by unanimous consent, have in them vastly more that is animal than that is divine. So much are men impressed by this fact that attempts are very commonly made, in a somewhat rabbinical spirit, to dull the sharp edge of some of the sayings in this wonderful collection, and to make this fundamental law of Christian morals of none effect. There have not been wanting some who have seriously maintained that it constitutes no part of Christianity proper. Those who profess to derive from it their standard of moral obligation are seldom, if ever, prepared to accept without qualification as binding upon them every precept in it. So far is it above even the highest level of human conduct which has come under our personal observation that any one who should claim, in our time, to observe it perfectly would be likely to be regarded as an

empty boaster, or as lacking in self-knowledge and ethical appreciation.

It would seem, therefore, to be beyond controversy that if the moral teachings of the gospel are to exert any continuous influence on the conduct of the human race, if the most spiritual of them are not to be ignored as having no relation to the ethical resources of human nature, they must be made in some way to appear practical ; men must be enabled to regard them as coming within the range of human achievement. Ideals which are obviously visionary and beyond reach will not long influence human conduct. Men will try to visit the north pole, but not the north star. The law of the survival of the fittest operates here as everywhere. Only what is useful will be preserved. Moral standards which seem unattainable will not long be regarded as obligatory, and lower ones will be substituted for them. A rule of duty that is too high will be deemed lacking in the right to command obedience. It may still evoke an æsthetic admiration, but it will have no power to stimulate the conscience or improve the conduct. It will be found easier to impugn the authority of Jesus as a moral teacher than to retain a moral standard which is too spiritual for human imitation. His utterances will be deemed indefinitely figurative or even erroneous, if they bind burdens on the human soul which transcend its greatest powers. The Christian code will fare no better than did that of Moses if, like that, it shall come to seem impracticable.

It is the province of Christian dogma to avert this danger, to meet these difficulties. So far is it from being true that the so-called "doctrines" are merely a parasitical growth which has almost sucked the life-blood out of the religion of Jesus, it is they that have saved the Sermon on the Mount. They have kept alive in the earth its highest conception of human duty by making this seem practical and within ultimate reach of human effort. The Bible would surely never have been called a revelation if it had limited itself to describing and inculcating a superhuman righteousness. The human race has always had examples of a higher virtue than most of its members were willing to emulate. The New Testament justifies the high esteem in which it is held as a source of religious light, not merely by furnishing a faultless ethical ideal, but also, and even chiefly, by unveiling facts which bring that ideal within reach of normal human powers. It does not merely define and illumine the character of God, it points out the gradually ascending path by which men may climb to the height of that character. It draws attention not merely to moral ends that must be gained, but also to the ways and means by which these may be compassed. And it is by its dogmas that it thus brings its ethical requirements into practical relation to human ability.

I give to the word, however, a wider meaning than it generally suggests. All the teachings of the gospel which are not strictly ethical I class as

dogmatic. The fatherhood of God, divine forgiveness, the promise of ultimate spiritual success, belong to the same category as the incarnation and the atonement. They pertain to the philosophy of Christianity as distinct from its ethics, and may, therefore, properly be termed dogmas.

Some of them serve to enlarge a man's idea of his own nature; all of them, as has been said already, tend to diminish his sense of the disproportion existing between his present powers and the duties which the gospel enjoins upon him. The doctrine of immortality, or at least a belief in an indefinite prolongation of life beyond the grave, is indispensable to the success of Christ's moral teachings, for it conveys the assurance that human existence will be long enough for the completion of the work which they outline. No man will build an expensive house on the surface of a frozen pond, nor will he labor to rear a perfect character in a soul which is doomed to melt away in the narrow space of time which separates the cradle from the grave. The feeling of despondency which is apt to influence even the best men when they discover how slowly their moral ideals are being overtaken, which found expression in Paul's ¹ despairing words, "The good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice," is likely to be largely offset and to be brought within manageable limits by the assurance that, hard as is the task of reshaping the human soul into the

¹ Romans vii. 19.

likeness of Christ, there is all eternity to accomplish it in.

So, too, with the doctrine of divine adoption, the dogma by faith in which we cry, "Abba, Father." It expands a man, and tends to remove all appearance of preternaturalism from the commandments of Jesus. If these inculcate a conduct that is divine, are they not appropriate to him who has already been received into the family of God? Though it doth not yet appear what he shall be, ought there not to be enough of promise in his new relation to his Maker to render him persistent and enthusiastic in the pursuit of a righteousness which will harmonize with his new dignity? These dogmas, and others that might be classed with them, — some of which will be examined more particularly in later chapters, — have a tendency to make the highest ethical conduct seem natural to a man because they elevate him, in some measure, into that spiritual atmosphere in which the purest ethical ideals will seem at home.

The doctrines which have just been named, and more of the same order, are likely to undergo very little alteration in their outward form; but there are others which suffer many a metamorphosis as time rolls on, many a change both in philosophical interpretation and in literary statement. They are like the long sandy islands which skirt so much of our Atlantic coast, and which mark the old battle-ground between the rivers and the sea. Because they have been built up in the conflict, a

shield has been created behind which the inland waters are at rest. It has been the fortune of Christianity to come in collision with the philosophies and religions of more than eighteen centuries. To defend the beliefs which were inseparable from its life it has been forced to enter the arena of apologetics. It has fought for its vital doctrines with whatever intellectual weapons the times afforded. As a result many a creed was banked up, many a theological system was framed, with no more of permanence in it than there is in many a bank of sand which the currents and the gales are likely soon to reshape or to carry elsewhere. But they achieved their purpose. They saved invaluable religious dogmas from ruinous reverses. Behind them were eternal truths which were menaced by shifting phases of human opinion, and which were kept alive only by theological statements that were at times as transitory as the views which they served to combat.

There are then three elements in the Christian religion : first, its ethical teachings ; second, the theological facts which make these practical ; and third, the philosophical interpretations of these facts by which it is sought to harmonize them with various phases of secular thought. It is only the element last named that can undergo material alterations, and these will be as frequent and diverse as are the changes in current opinion which occasion them. As the fortifications of a city may be made in turn of earth, stone, and iron, as their

location and structure will be different at different times to keep pace with improvements in ordnance, as the history of the military experiences of the place may be read, to some extent, in its abandoned redoubts and antiquated battlements, so the creeds and dogmatic theories of the Christian Church have swiftly succeeded one another, and doubtless have been crude enough at times. They have been modified and transformed so often as to have become a target for much shallow sarcasm. But they are only the outworks that were thrown up to defend essential features of the faith against ever-varying forms of rationalistic or heretical attack. The kernel of the religion, whether on its ethical or its doctrinal side, has not changed. It cannot change. The world will never be satisfied with a lower conception of righteousness than that of the New Testament, and a higher is inconceivable. But this is so high that it will be abandoned as a practical ideal unless such stimulating doctrines as immortality, the atonement, the incarnation, and others shall be retained, at least in their essentials, as objects of a confident faith. Christian apologetics may still be expected to vary its methods of defending these. To the wornout creeds of the past it will add others which will be outworn in turn. The history of doctrine will continue to be, in the main, a history of military antiquities in the long warfare of the church militant. And as long as the human intellect shall continue its march the defenders of the faith will find it true that

“ Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be :
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

It is not a little strange that there are so many who fail to appreciate the magnitude of the debt which Christianity owes to its doctrines. It argues some lack of psychological insight, some inability to understand the springs and motives of human conduct, when it is seriously proposed to confine the preaching of the gospel to its moral teachings, to bring men face to face with the perfect ethics of Jesus without revealing to them any way of crossing the vast gulf which yawns between what they are and what they are thus made to see that they ought to be. The Jewish religion had its sacrifices and its rites ; but even with the aid of such auxiliaries, it was so far from securing a general obedience to its elevated moral commandments that these were lowered, in the end, to the moral level of the people and almost disappeared in the quicksands of rabbinical theology. To expect that Christianity will encounter any better fate if it shall offer to the world, in time to come, nothing save its sublime but discouraging moral precepts is to ignore alike historical precedent and the rooted tendencies of human nature.

Christianity owes its past success and most of its present power to the fact that it appeals with supreme force to two universal principles of human action. One of these is the natural reverence of

the soul for a high ethical example ; the other is the innate desire of men for an easy way to compass their ends. It is, at the same time, the hardest and the easiest of religions. On its ethical side, it enjoins a perfect holiness, which it has exemplified by a faultless human character and has expressed in written laws or principles from which no jot or tittle can be removed ; on its doctrinal side, it accords the full privileges of the kingdom of God to him who has only made a beginning in the Christian life.

Who would have expected to find in one and the same religion two such contrasted and seemingly irreconcilable views of moral obligation as are suggested in that onerous command to the rich young ruler, — “ Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me ; ” and in that almost prodigal promise to a crucified robber, who had merely begun to emit a gleam of a better purpose, — “ To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise ” ? Who would have imagined that there would ever have been joined together in the utterances of a single religious teacher such almost superhuman commands as, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,” “ Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” “ Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,” and such indulgent declarations as, “ My yoke is easy, and my burden is light,” “ Every

one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven," "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward"? What could appear more self-contradictory, at the first glance, than the uncompromising moral law of the gospel and the minute act of obedience which constitutes a man a Christian, and, therefore, an heir of salvation? What could seem more inconsistent with itself than a religion which proffers the Sermon on the Mount as the unalterable law of human duty, and then declares, "He that believeth on me hath (already) everlasting life?" What theological expressions can be coined which would seem to be mutually more exclusive than salvation by perfect works and salvation by imperfect faith, both of which, as shown in the foregoing quotations and elsewhere in the New Testament, represent contrasted sides of the gospel message?

But it is to this combination of seemingly irreconcilable features, to this union of almost self-contradictory requirements, that the gospel owes its power. The secret of its age-long influence does not consist, as some have persuaded themselves, in the faultless purity of its ethics, nor, as others of antinomian tendencies tacitly assume, in a substitution of belief for works of righteousness, but in a fusion of both. The unapproachable holiness of its Founder, the ideal standard of vir-

tue which he inculcated, the superhuman beauty of character which he would have men win, united to inspire them with a wholesome sense of their own meagre moral attainments, with an enlarged conception of the ethical possibilities of human nature, and with indefinite longings for the divine life which was thus brought within their comprehension. But, on the other hand, to forestall any seriously depressing or discouraging influence that might be exerted upon them by the contemplation of the perfect moral law, there was furnished, at the same time, a revelation of the means by which so distant a moral goal can be reached, of the relative minuteness of the acts by which a divine character may be built up, of the comparatively easy though long pathway by which the heights of a perfect life can be scaled. It was thus that the ideal was made practical. The ethics of Christ alone would have failed to secure a widespread imitation. The easy conditions on which admittance to his kingdom was granted would of themselves have tended to consign virtue to the remote background of effort. But the two united keep in the same field of view ideal righteousness and a practical route to it. They impose moral obligations that are large enough for children of God, and at the same time smooth the path of obedience by promises which are suited to children of men, and which assure those who are climbing it that they are already the heirs of the salvation.

Jesus in his conversation with Nathanael seems

to have identified himself with that ladder which the patriarch saw in his dreams reaching from earth to heaven. We ourselves can recognize it in the twofold aspect of Christianity which has just been presented. Its top rests against the Sermon on the Mount illustrated and vivified by the perfect life of Jesus. This is the heaven to which men are invited. It marks the ethical condition which makes heaven possible, the standard of righteousness below which there can be no permanent satisfaction for the human conscience. The rungs which make the ladder worthy of the name, the successive steps in the sublime staircase, are endless acts of obedience and self-denial which few, if any, would have the courage and patience to persist in were it not for the promises and declarations of a doctrinal nature which Christ has interwoven with his ethical instructions. These promises and declarations — to carry out the figure — may be compared to the sides of a ladder. Without them there can be no upward gradation of steps. They are the source of the faith which gives men the patience to climb. They bring an otherwise inaccessible elevation of character within reach by making it possible to divide the long ascent into innumerable easy stages which are adapted to the rudimentary nature of man's present moral development, and at the same time they furnish in various ways, which will be mentioned more explicitly hereafter, the courage and persistence which are needed for so great an undertaking.

Indeed, there is in the gospel something analogous to the mechanical powers, and the large success it has had in the world is due to its use of a force which is comparable to that which is exerted along industrial lines by the wedge, the screw, or the inclined plane. I find, perhaps, in the path I am wont to pursue, a boulder which I wish were out of the way, but it is too heavy for me to move by any muscular energy that I have at my command. I ask myself if there is not some other way in which I can work upon it, if there is not some method by which I may increase my strength while dealing with it. It occurs to me at once that I can use a lever. Accordingly, I insert a crowbar under it, and am able at last to roll it to one side. I realize that what I have gained in power I have lost in time, that I have accomplished by a somewhat long and slow operation what I would have effected in an instant if I had only had six times my present strength; but I have attained my end.

Now Christian dogma is the lever by which high ethical results are accomplished. The life of Christ, the moral standard of the gospel, is something that is set before man for his imitation. He can never be satisfied with himself or truthfully say that he has fulfilled his whole duty until he has lifted his conduct up to the level thus revealed to him. But he needs to make only a few attempts to do so in order to become convinced that he has undertaken something beyond his strength.

What the theologians call his "moral inability" is an impassable boulder which blocks his way to the goal of his highest spiritual aspirations. The despairing cry of Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" expresses the feeling of every one who has tried to lift himself by his own native powers to the height of his purest moral ideals. It is an unconscious appeal for something in the realm of spiritual dynamics corresponding to the devices by which force is multiplied in the sphere of physical action.

Now doctrinal Christianity answers this appeal. It furnishes the lever by which human strength is made equal to the exactions of a cultivated conscience. To be sure, the law of the mechanical powers holds good here also. What is gained in force is lost in time. The process thus inaugurated will be a slow one. But this fact suggests the fundamental distinction between *law* and *grace*, which are so often contrasted in the New Testament. The practical value of the doctrine of immortality resides, as has been said, partly in the assurance it gives that there will be time enough. Law by its very nature requires immediate obedience to all of its commandments, and illustrates the quickest way of lifting the soul to God; but grace is willing to wait until slower processes have brought about the same result; while every cheering view which the gospel affords of God's attitude towards the human race, every stimulating promise from the same

source of divine assistance to the weak, of divine patience with the slow, every scriptural declaration that all barriers which may have been conceived to exist in the way to the Father have been removed, serves to augment the moral force of men and so to bring them gradually to that perfect character which they are too weak to attain at once.

Whatever, therefore, is divine in the moral teachings of Jesus implies the existence of as much that is divine in the doctrinal teachings which make these practicable. If we are justified in believing, on the strength of considerations already adduced or others, that our high moral aspirations, our growing conceptions of duty, are infused into the human mind by a Divine Being into whose likeness man is being gradually developed, it would seem inevitable that we should refer to the same source the ideas of religious truth without which our ethical ideals must remain inoperative and barren. If we are willing to concede that the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the Good Samaritan, and Paul's chapter on Love deserve to be regarded as having originated with God, it would scarcely be rational for us to deny that those dogmas of the Christian Church which have influenced men to adopt these wonderful utterances as a reasonable revelation of human duty are worthy of the same origin. As previously remarked, we cannot suppose that God will do things by halves. It is not consistent with our idea of a Being who is wise enough to create a world for us

to believe that he would make known to his creatures their supreme moral obligations and withhold from them the helpful facts without which such ethical knowledge would bring forth no satisfactory fruit. If the ends proposed are divine, so must be the means to those ends. If the moral standard is of heaven, so must the doctrines be which encourage men to emulate it. There can be no more of authority in the human conscience than there is in the theological tenets which render obedience to conscience possible. No greater weight can attach to the example of Jesus than to the doctrines without which that example is practically useless.

Plato wrote for a small intellectual aristocracy who could read and understand him, but mankind as a whole he deemed too ignorant to be helped by him. The Jewish teachers at the time of Christ had likewise narrowed their conception of the proper field of their religious influence until it embraced only those who were familiar with the rabbinical writings; "but this multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed." There seems to be an almost irresistible tendency on the part of religious teachers in general to adapt their instructions to the educated few rather than to the illiterate many, to present the truth in such a way as will meet the intellectual doubts of a small number of thinking men rather than in a manner that will commend it to the conscious spiritual needs of the great bulk of humanity. But a religion which

is so propagated must prove a failure if by religious success we mean the spiritual elevation of the whole human race. If we believe that Christianity is in any sense divine, we must feel that any interpretation of it is wrong which will necessarily confine its benefits to a favored few, to the relatively small number whom exceptional mental or moral gifts have lifted above the general level of their fellow men. Man can be redeemed only by influences which appeal to human nature as it is exhibited in men as a whole, and not as it has been modified and improved in a few individuals.

There are two ways in which the average man may be excluded from the benefits of the gospel. One of these Jesus had in mind when he administered that stern rebuke to the religious authorities of his time: "Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." We need only to read "theologians" for "lawyers"—which would not be a very inaccurate translation—in order to have our attention forcibly directed to a common abuse of our own day, which, however, at least in some quarters, is rapidly becoming less and less common. I refer to the custom of making assent to an elaborate creed an indispensable condition of enrollment as a follower of Christ. It is a custom akin to the practice which Christ denounced in the text just given,—the practice of putting the commentator on a level with the sacred author and inter-

posing the refracting atmosphere of mere human opinion between essential truth and those who desire to know it. Creeds are only the spectacles which the church wears to improve its eyesight, and they must be changed from time to time to suit alterations in its vision. They render intellectual assistance to the mind for a while and impart a temporary distinctness to important doctrines, but as education is sure to change the mental focus, they will obscure the truth afterwards if new lenses are not used. The "warlike" theory of the atonement might have been a useful article of faith as long as human minds were dominated by the belief that the souls of men were in the power of an almost omnipotent evil personality; but when that belief had waned, to insist upon it as an essential part of the doctrine of the atonement could have had no other effect than to bring the latter into doubt.

And so with philosophical explanations of the Trinity and other Christian dogmas: they may be helpful for the time being; but if they are made an integral part of a creed, the day is probably not far distant when they will have become antiquated, and when the distrust with which they will then be viewed will extend itself to the truths which they once helped to illuminate. A recognition of the obligation to acquire the character of Christ is the only article of faith to which the church should demand unqualified assent. It should not fail in addition to recommend the practical features of

the various Christian doctrines as indispensable aids to the attainment of the ideal thus chosen; and it can then safely trust its earnest members to adopt as many of them as shall aid in promoting their spiritual growth. To give to these doctrines, however, what is intended for a final statement of their deepest meaning, and to insist that this shall be accepted as an essential part of Christian faith, is not only to put intellectual barriers in the way of many who would make better Christians than theologians, but it is also to prepare the way for future breaks between the church and human scholarship. Creeds and commentaries may wisely be welcomed as aids to a broader understanding of revealed truth, but only when it is purposed that they shall not outlive their usefulness.

There is another way also in which the average man may be excluded from the benefits of the gospel, and that is by being confronted with his full ethical obligations without receiving any intellectual help whatever, or any save what is of the feeblest description. This method is the direct opposite of that which has just been described, and has already been considered in an earlier part of this chapter. There is something touching in the picture of a Robert Elsmere working in the slums with ethical aspirations but no beliefs, trying to remedy the failures of Christianity by stripping it of its most stimulating features, striving to elevate the morals of outcasts by diminishing the motives to morality. It was a correct instinct that led the

gifted author to describe the mission as unsuccessful. The gates of heaven may be barred against men as hopelessly by moral commandments which excel their moral powers as by philosophical creeds which transcend their intellectual capacity. If we expect to find in humanity as a whole that sympathy with the purest ethical ideals, that sensitiveness to the beauty of a self-sacrificing character, which is not uncommon, perhaps, in the circles in which we move, we have an exaggerated conception of the moral development of the human race. Such traits are rudimentary in mankind as a whole. They are capable of being indefinitely expanded by wise training; but to urge upon men as a rule of conduct the example and precepts of Jesus apart from all other considerations is to elicit, in nineteen cases out of twenty, an incredulous laugh or a bewildered stare. Those who would redeem mankind by profound philosophy and those who would save it by bare ethics are equally impractical. They are laboring for individuals and not for the race.

Before the bolt which fastens the door of a safe can be shot back several levers must be moved. Each of them is represented by a letter in the combination, and each of them must produce its effect before the safe can be opened. No doubt the portal of heaven must be unlocked by ideal moral conduct. To put in practice the perfect ethics of the Sermon on the Mount is to force back the bolt which is all that blocks the entrance of a

soul into a divine peace. But before this can be done, what difficulties must be overcome, what hindrances must be taken out of the way! What hopes must be excited and what fears allayed, what views of God must be embraced and what new ideas of life must be conceived, before a selfish nature will aspire to become divine! These hopes, views, ideas, represent the levers which dogmatic Christianity seeks to move. The doctrines are the combination which opens the safe, the correlated truths which must be brought to bear upon the soul before the highest ethical motive can be set to work.

When Christ said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," he was not promising the disciple a primacy among his fellows; for that is something which Peter evidently never possessed. Nor is it likely that he was merely indicating that Peter would be the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; for the fact that the latter was only to begin a work which was really to fall to the province of a much abler man would hardly seem important enough to match the impressive language of the promise. It is more probable that the profoundly figurative style of teaching which Jesus so often adopted, and which finds its most conspicuous illustrations in the parables and the miracles, is to be recognized here also. We shall be in harmony with the spirit of his method as it is exhibited in many of his deepest utterances and works, if we see in the words we are now considering a reference to the inspiring

truths with which the disciple was to be equipped for his mission, and by which he would be able to open human hearts to ethical influences as they had never been opened before by any agency that had been used for the reformation of man. If such was the significance of the keys, they were a gift to the whole church. As the power to bind and to loose, which was also bestowed on Peter at this time, was, on another occasion, granted to the disciples as a whole,¹ so we may believe that in the religious doctrines which have become inseparable from the moral teachings of the gospel, in the inspiring facts which associate the ethics of Christianity with all that human nature needs in the way of encouragement and hope, we have the golden keys of which Peter, indeed, was to be the first to learn the use, but which, in the hands of countless Christian preachers and teachers, were to unlock the kingdom of heaven for millions of men and women, in every age, in every clime, who would need to know that the portal could really be opened before they would have the courage to spend a life, and perhaps more than a life, in the pursuit of a perfect moral ideal.

Nor should the fact be overlooked in this connection that virtue is increased not only by approximating to our ideals of conduct but also by enlarging our own nature. A man with grand beliefs is likely to be a grander man than one who is without them. The perfect righteousness of a

¹ Matthew xviii. 18.

great man is, in a certain sense, greater than the perfect righteousness of one less able: it involves the consecration of vaster powers to the noblest ends. The higher one's conception of his essential dignity becomes, the loftier and broader his ambitions are apt to be; and it is the ambitions of a soul that measure its intrinsic value. So Paul seems to teach when he declares that God will render eternal life unto them that seek for glory and honor and incorruption. The very largeness of the ends they are pursuing makes them fit recipients of prizes of the same order.

That one who deems himself a son of God, an heir of immortality, a future companion of the just made perfect and of an innumerable company of angels, should be capable of higher aspirations and a more sublime character than one who deems himself but the king of beasts and the quintessence of dust would seem beyond dispute. The unexampled achievements of Christian civilization are those of men who were made equal to vast exploits by a deep sense of their immortality and of their kinship with God. Jesus alludes to the fact I am considering when he says: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The forerunner of the Messiah was the product of a relatively narrow religion, and even the humblest Christian who had caught a glimpse of his own intrinsic majesty, and of his privileges

as a member of the heavenly kingdom and as a joint heir with Christ of an incorruptible inheritance, had expanded his soul far beyond the dimensions attained by any one with less inspiring beliefs. As the most obscure American who appreciates his birthright will feel that he is superior to the most powerful barbarian king, so the sublime beliefs which Christianity has made the common property of a large portion of the human race impart to even the obscurest disciple a greatness which surpasses, in some respects, that of the greatest heir of a lesser faith. It is because the doctrines of the Christian religion enlarge human nature while they purify it, because they broaden the virtue of men while they perfect it, that they have earned an additional and special right to be reckoned among the most powerful ethical influences ever brought to bear on human character, and to be associated, in practice, with the moral teachings of Jesus as an inseparable part of a divine revelation.

The Christian dogmas, therefore, are an integral part of the religion of Christ. They cannot be separated from it without destroying much of the value of what remains. The successive modifications which have occurred in the explanations that have been given of them are not inconsistent with their fundamental truth, but rather emphasize it by illustrating its adaptedness to the shifting phases of developing religious thought. When, therefore, we consider, in addition to what has already been said, that the essence of these doc-

trines is derived from the utterances of men who represent the culmination of Hebrew inspiration, of men who may be justly regarded as expressing the final results of the most extensive and most truly scientific theological and religious induction that has ever been made by a single race, we cannot but accord to them a peculiar respect, and indulge the confident expectation of finding in them some of the most stimulating and helpful revelations that God has given to men.

CHAPTER IX

THE INCARNATION

THE influence of good example has been a very potent agency in the ethical development of the human race. Individuals are ever lifting themselves above the moral level of their fellow men, and the higher standards of conduct which are thus exemplified beget in others a desire to equal them. And this is especially true when the example is one of philanthropic self-sacrifice. It would be impossible to overestimate the effect which the unselfish patriotism of Washington has had on the character of the American people. Doubtless the disinterested conduct of Moses, as portrayed by the Jewish historian and psalmist, did much to elevate the moral ideals of his countrymen. The early legends of various peoples recount the self-sacrificing labors of certain mythical or half-historical benefactors whose lives were spent in the service of others, and whose names, consequently, keep before the popular mind a more or less high conception of moral obligation and of the possibilities of altruistic conduct. It is as true in ethics as it is in any other field of human action that men, as a rule, can be led to the summit of any

difficult achievement only by those who are leaders in the true sense of the word, by those, that is, who first heroically climb the slopes themselves. Self-sacrifice is the decisive test and the most winning expression of love ; and a religion which exemplifies the highest self-sacrifice is the one which will exert, in the long run, the most powerful leverage on the human mind and, other things being equal, reap the largest success in the end.

Any one who reads Edwin Arnold's poem, "The Light of Asia," must feel very powerfully drawn towards the character of Gautama as there portrayed. The self-denying philanthropy of a young prince who was in possession of all things which men generally regard as most desirable, and who could confidently look forward to a life filled with delights which are far beyond the reach of all save a favored few, but who gave up wealth, power, position, and domestic happiness in order to solve the problem of human pain and misery, who exchanged the robes of royalty for the beggar's garb that he might mitigate the suffering of his fellow men, — such an act of self-sacrifice, if it is believed by the Buddhist to have been performed by the founder of his religion, must inspire him with a peculiar interest and confidence in that religion. The cult will be glorified by the transcendent love which is ascribed to him who originated it. It will be clothed in the eyes of its adherents with all the prestige that naturally attaches itself to philanthropic movements which embody the results of

much disinterested study and many self-denying experiences.

It would seem, therefore, that the character of God must be associated with something of the same nature, if he is to be worshiped with enthusiasm and affectionate devotion, if it is not to be said with truth that in the hold which has been secured on men by many of their human benefactors there is something more tenacious and effective than can ever enter into the attachment of a man to his Maker. It would seem to be indispensable that the quality of self-sacrifice should appear conspicuously among the moral traits of the Almighty, if the Creator is ever to become the object of a more intense devotion than is accorded to some of the best of his creatures.

Now it is precisely this quality of the Infinite that natural religion does not adequately reveal. The theist can discover the power and wisdom of God in his works. He can deduce most of the moral attributes of the Most High, with more or less of confidence, from natural phenomena. The love and the benevolence of the Deity have been apprehended, in some measure, even by pagan minds. These qualities are well calculated to inspire awe, reverence, and even some degree of affection. But there is one kind of affection which they will not beget. There is nothing in them to call forth the love which goes out to one who has himself loved with a self-forgetful devotion that shrank not from the most terrible ordeal, that was

proof against all danger and all suffering. The conclusion would seem to be irresistible that if God is ever to win from the human race an expression of its highest gratitude, a worship which will lack no element of the highest conceivable personal consecration, his wisdom must devise some means by which he can withdraw from that state of being in which he is beyond the reach of pain and trial and enter into a condition of finite limitations in which it will be possible for him to exhibit self-sacrifice because it will be possible for him to undergo suffering. And is it not true that the affection, the intense loyalty, which the Christian feels towards his Maker is very largely due to the fact that he has been taught to believe that the greatest sacrifice of which love is capable has been made by God himself? Is it not equally true that the disciple of Jesus would feel somewhat abashed by the self-abnegation of a Gautama were he not able to set over against it, not merely the self-sacrifice of a humble Galilean carpenter, whose labor of love might be said to have involved no abandonment of previous ease and comfort, to have received even a substantial reward in the shape of an enhanced personal and social dignity, but also such a sublime allegation as is set forth in the text: "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

That the spirit of self-sacrifice is an element of the divine character may indeed be inferred from the fact that it has shown itself from time immemorial in human nature, and is therefore presumably one of the ethical qualities that man is deriving from the parent Mind. There is a vast difference, however, in respect to stimulating power and winning influence between a potential and an actual beneficence. The world loves, not those who would sacrifice themselves for others if they could find an opportunity, but those who have found one and used it. Between a character which is said to be capable of self-denial for others and one which has exhibited it there is all the difference in respect to impressiveness and the power to excite imitation that there is between precept and example. It would seem to be certain, therefore, that God must manifest a love which can be believed to have cost him supreme self-forgetfulness and privation if he is to receive from men the highest quality of devotion which human nature is able to evince. As the complexion of love is largely determined by the personal traits of those who elicit it, the command to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, to render to him, that is, an affection which is lacking in no element of completeness, would appear incapable of being obeyed unless self-sacrifice can be shown to have entered into God's dealings with men. In this fact we have one of the "knots" to which reference has already been made¹ and in the exist-

¹ Chap. v.

ence of which we find a foreshadowing of the miracle. For the presence of such a need in a world governed by such a Being as we hold God to be is itself a prophecy. It justifies the expectation that divine knowledge and goodness combined will discover a fitting way to meet it.

The Gentile world had its seers and its inspiration as well as the Jewish race. The consciousness of an inability to solve moral problems which finds expression in the prediction ascribed to Moses that another teacher would supplement his work, which moved John the Baptist to direct his disciples to a greater than himself who was close behind him, is paralleled in the expectations of Confucius and Zoroaster that a larger revelation of the truth than they could give was yet to be furnished to the world. The despair of Tacitus when he declared that human life was one great farce and expressed the conviction that the Roman world lay under some terrible curse, the feelings of Cicero when he pictured the enthusiasm which would greet the embodiment of true virtue should it ever appear on earth, the longing of Seneca for some hand from without to lift humanity out of the ruin of despair, are echoes from the very century in the midst of which Christ died, and ought to have prepared any mind with an adequate conception of God for some remarkable providence. The mystery of human iniquity, the failure of all known forces and influences to effect the reformation of men, that sense of superhuman difficulty which

found expression in the text,¹ "Which things angels desire to look into," were prophetic of great events. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. In other words, when the problem of human life becomes too hard for the human race collectively or through the medium of its wisest minds to solve, in that very fact is to be recognized a prediction of and a preparation for a new gift of divine light to the world.

And another need, associated with if not involved in the one just described, is that of divine companionship. There is something discouraging to the average mind in the thought of the gulf which separates the finite from the infinite. The enjoyment felt by the child in the society of its father, the encouragement which the private soldier derives from any friendliness shown him by his commander-in-chief, the loyal devotion with which a peasant is inspired when he becomes an object of kindly interest to his sovereign, are repeated and enlarged in the experiences of those who believe that God has entered into personal relations with them and has not felt too far above them to make himself one of them. The theophanies, the manifestations of divine beings in human form, which are described in pagan literature as well as in the Old Testament, are to him who has an exalted idea of God's benevolence only so many prophetic intimations of coming events. In whatever way these stories may have originated, they bear witness to the exist-

¹ 1 Peter i. 12.

ence of a desire, a craving, on the part of men for divine society. The myths, the legends, the religious theories of mankind, have a psychological bearing which entitles them to much respect. It is no objection to the doctrine of the Incarnation to say that it can be classed with them. They represent the strivings of the collective human mind after religious truth. They reflect a worldwide mental condition, and therefore shed an indispensable light on the problems which a religion must solve, on the facts of human nature with which it must harmonize, if it is to be successful and universal. In a word, they show the way in which God must come to men in order to win them.

It is important for us to understand in just what light Jesus was regarded by those who first preached his gospel, how the mystery of his person and life was solved by that inspiration which has given us the New Testament. We cannot but attach great value to the utterances made on this subject by a people like the Hebrews, who are acknowledged to speak with peculiar authority on religious questions, and whose prophetic deliverances, if we are to judge them by their effects, never reached a higher spiritual level than is represented by the literature of the New Testament. If it is possible to determine the meaning of an author from his writings, it can hardly be denied that the New Testament teaches as plainly that Christ is God as that there is a God.

It would evidently be beyond the scope of the

present volume to give even a brief résumé of the controversy which has been waged in reference to the person of Christ between different sections of the Christian Church. Nor could I hope to interest the general reader in the exegetical hair-splitting of which much of this controversy consists. It is possible, however, to summarize the utterances of the Scriptures on this point in such a way as to show that the conclusion with which the last paragraph ends is abundantly warranted. If we interpret the language of the sacred writers in reference to the needs of those for whom they wrote, and read in it the meaning it must obviously have had for men and women who were not metaphysicians but plain people in want of plain instruction, there can scarcely be two opinions as to its teachings on this point.

What is the Biblical idea of God? It is that of a Being of whom certain acts, attributes, qualities, etc., are distinctively characteristic; that is, they belong to him and to no other being. We know no one save through certain peculiarities which individually or collectively pertain to him alone. We recognize a friend by his looks, his bearing, the tone of his voice, his customary expressions. If these are not observable, we know him no longer. If an intimate acquaintance should appear before us with his face hidden by a mask, his familiar garments covered by a domino, and with his voice disguised, we should take him for a stranger. We should be able to see in him none

of the distinguishing marks by which we have been wont to recognize him, and therefore we must fail to identify him.

So when a well-known historical personage is introduced into a work of fiction under an assumed name, if we are able to penetrate his disguise it is by detecting in him some of the qualities which we associate with that personage. We easily recognize in the nameless "Black Knight" of "Ivanhoe" King Richard the First of England, for his immense strength, the device upon his shield, when combined with various other circumstances, can be referred only to that monarch. So our idea of any person whom we have never seen is derived entirely from description, from certain acts, qualities, characteristics which we have been taught to connect with him alone, and apart from which it would be impossible for us to form any idea of him whatever.

Now we get our conception of God in the same way. We could not form one intelligently save by putting together certain characteristics which we have learned from nature or the Bible to refer to him alone. We fix our thoughts on these, and they unite in producing a certain mental image or concept which is our idea of God. Without them it would be no more possible to think of God than it would be for a person who had been born blind to form a correct notion of color.

What, then, are the characteristics which the Bible ascribes to God by means of which we are

able to identify him, to distinguish him from the gods of the pagan cults? I will enumerate some of the most important of them, and at the same time cite the texts in which they are mentioned.

1. Creation is declared to be an act peculiar to God. "Thus saith the Lord, . . . I am the Lord, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone*; that spreadeth abroad the earth; who is with me?" (margin: by myself). (Isaiah xliv. 24.)

2. He is the preserver of all things. "Thou art the Lord, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and *thou preservest* them all." (Nehemiah ix. 6.)

3. He is omnipotent. "The Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty." (Genesis xvii. 1.)

So in nine different books of the Old Testament the same title is given to Jehovah. The Hebrew word translated Almighty (*shaddai*) occurs in no other connection.

4. He is omnipresent.

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

(Psalms cxxxix. 7-10.)

5. He is immutable. "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James i. 17.) "For I the Lord change not." (Malachi iii. 6.)

6. He is eternal.

"Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."
(Psalms xc. 2.)

7. He is an infallible judge of human thoughts and motives. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." (Jeremiah xvii. 9, 10.)

8. He is the sole object of adoration. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew iv. 10.)

Here, then, we have the character of God presented to us in the Bible in eight different aspects. Others might be added, but these will suffice. Creation is ascribed to him in such a way as to exclude the agency of any other being. The omnipotence attributed to him is evidently regarded as belonging to him alone. So all of the remaining characteristics were viewed by the Hebrews as distinctively divine and as referable only to Jehovah. Whenever, therefore, a being is referred to in the

Bible as a creator, we cannot doubt that God is intended ; and even more certain must we be, if such a thing were possible, that God is meant when a person is named as possessing many or even all of the characteristics which the Scriptures have taught us to associate with God alone.

I have in mind, for example, a certain monument in Boston which I may describe as being 221 feet high, as standing on Bunker Hill, as having been erected to commemorate a battle, and as being taller than any other structure of the kind in the city. If, therefore, I am told that there is on Breed's Hill in Boston a granite shaft 221 feet in height, which commemorates a battle of the Revolutionary War and is the loftiest monument in New England, I am at no loss to identify the object my informant is speaking of as the same that I have in mind, notwithstanding the difference in the name of the hill. I know that there cannot be two monuments each of which is higher than the other. All of the characteristics which he has enumerated cannot by any possibility belong to two different structures. If he is a perfectly trustworthy person, I have no doubt whatever that we have both been describing the same object, and that the apparent disagreement between us is due to some historical fact which has led him to give the name of Breed's Hill to what I have called Bunker Hill.

Or to give another illustration : A foreigner may be informed that Ulysses S. Grant directed

the movements of the army of the Potomac in the latter part of our civil war, that he captured Vicksburg, and, as commander-in-chief of the Union forces, received the surrender of Lee's army. The man may subsequently be informed that Hiram U. Grant was the last leader of the Potomac army, that it was his generalship that brought about the fall of Vicksburg, and that he was commander-in-chief when Lee laid down his arms. The person to whom these seemingly contradictory statements have been made will not doubt, if they come from reliable sources, that the same officer is referred to in both of them. The exploits which each is said to have performed are related with such attendant circumstances that they cannot be supposed to have been achieved by more than one military commander. He will naturally conclude — what was actually the case — that Ulysses S. Grant had also been called Hiram U. Grant.

So the Biblical idea of God is that of a Being who created the world, who preserves it, and so on. To whatever Being, therefore, the sacred writings ascribe the acts and traits which they have already used to convey to us a distinct conception of God, we cannot but be certain that by that Being, whatever name they give to him, God is meant. Now all the characteristics which I have just mentioned as uniting to form the Biblical idea of God the New Testament also ascribes to Jesus Christ.

1. Christ is said to have created the world.

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.” (Colossians i. 15–18.)

See, also, the creative acts attributed to the Logos in the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel.

I am aware that there are those who insist that a distinction should be made in this connection between the prepositions *by* and *through* (or, in Greek, between *ἐπὶ* with the genitive, on the one hand, and *διὰ* with the genitive, on the other); but, in view of the fact that the creation is ascribed in the Old Testament to God *alone* (see text above quoted), that distinction cannot be pressed in the present case. It can hardly be supposed that Paul, if we concede that he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians, could have intended to teach anything contrary to the passage in Isaiah just referred to, that either he or the author of the Fourth Gospel purposed to contradict by the use of the word “through” the undoubted teaching of the word “alone.” The fact, therefore, must stand that what is elsewhere mentioned in the Bible as an exclusively divine act is said, in the New Testament, to have been performed, in some real and important sense, by Christ. I feel justified, therefore, in retaining the act of creation as a point

of comparison, although it could be omitted altogether without prejudice to my argument.

2. Christ is the preserver of the world. The closing sentence in the previous quotation would bear out this statement, but the last clause of the following passage may also be cited.

“God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds ; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, *and upholding all things by the word of his power,*” etc. (Hebrews i. 1-3.)

3. He is omnipotent. So much would be inferred from the acts of power already ascribed to him in the creation and preservation of the world. We can form no higher idea of omnipotence than is suggested by the ability to do such things. There are not wanting texts, however, in which the attribute seems to be expressly ascribed to him.

“The Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby *he is able even to subject all things unto himself.*” (Philippians iii. 20, 21.)

4. He is omnipresent. So much is implied in the fact that in him all things consist. But the following text is also in harmony with it: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew xviii. 20.)

5. He is immutable.

“ But of the Son he saith,
 . . . Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of
 the earth,
 And the heavens are the works of thy hands :
 They shall perish ; but thou continuest :
 And they all shall wax old as doth a garment ;
 And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up,
 As a garment, and they shall be changed :
But thou art the same,
 And thy years shall not fail.”

(Hebrews i. 8, 10-12.)

“ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day,
 yea and for ever.” (Hebrews xiii. 8.)

6. He is eternal. So we should infer from the
 general tenor of the first of the two preceding
 quotations ; but the same fact is found elsewhere.

“ And he laid his right hand upon me, saying,
 Fear not ; I am the first and the last, and the
 Living one ; and I was dead, and behold, I am
 alive for evermore.” (Revelation i. 17, 18.)

7. He is an infallible judge of human thoughts
 and motives. “ These things saith the Son of
 God, . . . And all the churches shall know that I
 am he which searcheth the reins and hearts : and
 I will give unto each one of you according to your
 works.” (Revelation ii. 18, 23.)

This text is all the more noteworthy because it
 seems expressly designed to identify, by the words
 “ I am he,” the son of God who uttered it with
 Jehovah into whose mouth the same words had
 been previously put by Jeremiah. (See citation
 above.)

8. He is an object of adoration. "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians ii. 9-11.)

"And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, *and unto the Lamb*, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever." (Revelation v. 13.)

These ascriptions of a joint worship to the Father and the Son have a peculiar significance when taken in connection with the citation from the words of Christ himself which is given above: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve" (καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις). (Matthew iv. 10.)

This method of condensing the teachings of the Bible on this subject may be compared to that pursued in building an arch. Both columns are made up of stones corresponding in size and number, and gradually approach each other until all that is needed for the completion of the structure is the insertion of a single stone which will join the two columns together. The successive stones in the above argument are creation, pre-

servation, omnipotence, etc. God created the world, Christ created the world, God preserves it, Christ preserves it, God is omnipotent, Christ is omnipotent, and so on. All that is now lacking is some text or texts which will assure us that these writers were perfectly aware of what they were teaching, that we are not deducing from their utterances a conclusion which they would have repudiated, but that they clearly understood the logical drift of their momentous statements. A distinct recognition on their part of the essential oneness of the Father and the Son would serve to remove all suspicion of accident or carelessness from the results to which they have led the great mass of their readers for eighteen centuries. And this need is abundantly met. The first verse in the Fourth Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" the sixth verse in the second chapter of Philippians, "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God;" the eighth verse in the first chapter of Hebrews, already cited for another purpose, "But of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," are texts which fulfill the various conditions just named. So, too, the most natural rendering of Revelation xxii. 10-16 identifies Christ under the name of *Jesus* with him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. That at least the first three of these passages teach the substantial

identity of God and Christ would never have been questioned save in the interests of a preconceived theory; and although Lightfoot and Alford can be quoted against that interpretation of the fourth which I have adopted, I am convinced that most candid persons will feel that the views of these justly celebrated scholars are opposed to the obvious teaching of the passage. These direct identifications of Christ with God, or any one of them, in fact, will serve for the keystone of the arch; so that what began as two ends as one. They help to support the two columns of evidence already described, and at the same time are held in place by them. All of the texts cited and many others that might be added interpret one another. They unite to form a coherent, self-consistent structure of doctrinal teaching, which establishes the proposition with which this discussion began, and shows that Christ was regarded as God incarnate by some of the leading Christian writers to whom we owe the groundwork of our religious faith.

It is not enough to show that the texts quoted may be made, by dint of more or less exegetical ingenuity, to yield a different meaning from that which is most obvious. The difficulty to be overcome by him who would assail them lies much deeper. He is obliged to assume, in utter disregard of the theory of probabilities, that several writers who undertook to reveal the essential nature of Christ coincidentally blundered so as to give the impression that he was God incarnate when it

was not their purpose to convey any such idea. If we could admit that a single author, as, for example, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, was infelicitous in expressing himself on this subject, it would be a strange coincidence if the author of the Fourth Gospel made precisely the same mistake. And even if we could adjust our minds to such an improbability, our credulity would be overtaxed if we were asked to believe that the author of Philippians committed exactly the same blunder. Moreover, those who deny that Philippians and Colossians were from the same pen must maintain that the author of the latter furnishes another instance of the same error ; while those who contend that the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel were composed by different persons have added the author of the former to the list as a fifth. That five, or four, or even three independent authors who were writing for common people, or that three writers in five different books, should have accidentally used language so awkwardly as to necessitate the conclusion in most minds that they believed that Christ was God is improbable to the verge of absurdity. The truth of their statements may of course be legitimately questioned, but to hold that they unintentionally united in teaching a most startling doctrine which none of them believed transcends the powers of logical thought.

I am well aware that there are many upon whom the fact which I have thus endeavored to establish will make no impression, that the time has gone by

when a discussion of this question can be settled by an appeal to proof-texts. It has been my purpose in the foregoing argument only to determine and set forth just what views were held regarding the person of Christ by those writers who lived in his time and who reflect, consequently, the impression made by his life and teachings upon his own age. And it would seem to be an undeniable fact that the people to whom is attributed the clearest theological insight that any section of the human race has ever attained, who, as Professor Huxley expresses it, "created the first consistent, remorseless, naked monotheism which, so far as history records, appeared in the world," who knew no greater sin than the worship of the creature as the Creator, gave birth, nevertheless, in the crowning period of its unique inspiration to a book which, while embodying the highest phases of that inspiration, ascribed over and over again such qualities, acts, and attributes to a man as make it impossible for most fair-minded persons to distinguish him, in any important particular, from the Supreme Being.

And, moreover, it is the whole book that is responsible for this result. The doctrine of the incarnation does not rest on a certain number of passages culled from the writings of three or four of the sacred authors. Of the twenty-seven documents which compose the New Testament and the nine or more authors who contributed them, there is scarcely one that does not furnish something to substantiate the doctrine we are considering. Not

one of them gives it in its entirety. Not one of them but leaves some gaps in the story of the incarnation. Some affirm the original divinity of Christ and that he took on himself the nature of man. Others supply a link that is missing in these accounts by relating the incident of the miraculous birth. Some who make no statements as to the essential sublimity of Christ's nature, and are supposed by some on that account to be ignorant of the views regarding it which were held by others, record, nevertheless, works wrought by him which are in harmony with those views, teachings uttered by him which deserve to be called divine, and a life lived by him which may well be deemed godlike. And still another, hardly more than glancing at the earthly career and experiences of Jesus, describes his glory after death in such language that Baur, whom no one will suspect of prejudice in the premises, declares that the honors paid to Christ in the Apocalypse leave no room for any important distinction between him and the Deity.

And this remarkable harmony and dovetailing of so many documents, written for different purposes and from diverse points of view, was not the result of collusion. It is now known that they were all, with possibly an unimportant exception or two, practically contemporaneous. All, or about all of them, appeared during a period of hardly more than forty years. They were at the outset, in many instances, the property of only sections of

the Christian Church, and time was required for them to become generally known. There is no reason to suppose that the different authors were as a rule acquainted with one another's writings. Yet when their various contributions were brought together in the canon, they were found to fit into one another in such a way as to create a conception of Jesus Christ as God incarnate which is at once adequate, self-consistent, and grand.

It would not be strange if we were reminded of a large load of boxes which was once landed on an island near New York city. Each of them contained a metallic casting, evidently fragmentary and of a shape which would be unintelligible to most people ; but when all were put together they formed the statue of Liberty which is now standing there. So, out of the New Testament as a whole, out of a union of various independent documents dating back to the time of the first disciples, out of the bright, consummate flower of Hebrew inspiration, there has arisen a supernatural figure, self-consistent in words and works, in character and alleged origin, which the Christian Church have been constrained to regard as the god-man and the incarnate Deity.

Now we have here a psychological phenomenon which demands an explanation and compels us to ask the questions: Were these men in the right? Is it irrational to accept their view? Without at present admitting that their declarations are of themselves competent to prove so startling a doc-

trine, is it consistent with a right use of the reasoning faculties to regard it as at least possibly true? Is it entitled to so much respect as a dictum of religious philosophy that it may be held by a thoughtful man without subjecting him to the charge of superstition or credulity?

Some years ago a clergyman in one of our most cultured cities, commenting on a powerful lecture which had recently been given on this same subject, expressed his amazement that the lecturer should have had the impiety to put on a level with the Creator a man who had lived for only thirty years in far-off Palestine. Now, waiving all criticism of any inexactness there may be in his report of what the lecturer actually said, and without dwelling on the fact that this man appeared at the centre and source of the most potent religious influence of his time, and that the providential choice of locality has been justified by subsequent results, the question may properly be asked, Is there necessarily any impiety in believing that God might, under any circumstances whatever, become *a* man? Is there necessarily anything so low and debasing in a life lived in the flesh that we must deem it inconsistent with an adequate conception of the great Creator to suppose that he could for any conceivable reason be moved to live such a life? Is the condition of humanity inevitably so low in every respect that no considerations can be imagined which would induce him who placed man in it to enter it himself?

To answer these questions affirmatively is to betray a false idea of true dignity, an inadequate appreciation of the essentials of divine majesty. The monarch who forsakes his throne and mingles in disguise with his subjects in order that he may become a wiser king resumes his sceptre with no stain on his royalty, but with a new gloss on his manhood. The philanthropist who leaves behind him the comforts and refinements to which he has been used, who lives with the ignorant and the unclean, with vagabonds and criminals of every description, winning his bread as they win it when they come by it honestly, spending his nights as they do in station-houses or on the pavement, who endures the abuse, the insults, the privations incident to this mode of living, and all merely that he may be better able to understand and eventually to mitigate the lot of those who move and have their being in the lowest social stratum, has certainly not degraded himself in our estimation by so doing, but has shed a new lustre on human nature.

Now, if it was necessary, in order that God might reveal his self-sacrificing nature and so win an enthusiastic devotion from his creatures which would develop in them a character that could not otherwise be produced, if in order to do this it was necessary that he should perform a stupendous act of self-sacrifice, is it derogatory to a proper conception of divine dignity to believe that he would do so? If, in order to enable them to view him as a friend, a faithful companion, a

sympathizing confidant, an ever-present help in time of trouble, and to cultivate in them moral qualities and conduct appropriate to such a conception of him, it was indispensable that he should afford them such an object-lesson, such a definite illustration of his true nature as only an incarnation would furnish, is there any impiety in affirming that he would, under such circumstances, take on himself the form and nature of a man? Admitting that such an act on his part would be a miracle of vast proportions, would *that* fact constitute an insuperable objection to believing that such an act had been performed, if, as has been previously urged, there can be nothing irrational in holding that God would transcend the sphere of familiar natural law in order to obtain a desirable result which could not otherwise be achieved? If the belief in an incarnation has been beneficial to the human race, if mankind would not have reached its present spiritual level without it, if it could not have been omitted from the creeds of Christendom during the last eighteen centuries, nor from those of most churches at the present time, without deadening missionary effort and weakening the motives to self-denial, certainly there can be nothing impious or absurd in the supposition that to create such a belief God would, if it was necessary, become *a* man; for love makes all sacrifices possible, and we have learned to regard God as the personification of love.

If, then, there is nothing intrinsically unreason-

able in the belief that God might, to gain otherwise unattainable ends, become *a* man, is there anything irrational in the doctrine that he did become *the* man Jesus? If he should become a man, is it conceivable that he would be a better one? In order to become morally like God, would any man have to add to his own character any virtues or any degree of virtue which Jesus lacked? Could incarnate Deity be more truthfully represented than by perfect manhood? On the contrary, is it not true that the life of Jesus has exalted our idea of the ethical qualities of the Almighty, and that the God whom Christians worship, no matter what may be their theory of the person of Christ, is simply Jesus of Nazareth abstracted from the necessary limitations of a finite human life? As Mill¹ says: "It is Christ rather than God whom Christianity has held up to believers as the pattern of perfection for humanity. It is the God incarnate more than the God of the Jews who being idealized has taken so great and salutary a hold on the human mind." To say that if God should assume human nature he would be a better man than Jesus would be virtually to say that he would be better than we now deem him to be, since the moral character we refer to him is simply that of Christ. If, then, it is supposable that to accomplish a work of divine love God might become a human being, there could certainly be no absurdity in supposing that for such an end he did become the man whose

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, pp. 253, 254.

character we are necessarily honoring when we praise God. Nor can there be any more impiety in maintaining that Christ was God than in holding that God is Christ, in seeing the Deity in our only perfect man than in beholding in the Deity merely our highest standard of perfect manhood.

That the doctrine of the incarnation should give rise to some unanswerable questions was to be expected. The fields of philosophic research which lie beyond the scope of the finite reason are fertile in paradoxes. The contradictions in which every one involves himself who ventures to speculate on the nature of the Absolute are not to be wholly avoided by those who would explain the transition of the Absolute into the Conditioned. Indeed, it may well be questioned whether orthodoxy has not attempted too much in this direction. No doubt the temptation was great. The problem suggested has fascinated some of the profoundest minds the world has known. There are texts in the Scriptures — some of which have been already quoted — which leave no escape from dualism or tritheism unless there is such a diversity in the divine unity that the Godhead can be referred to collectively as well as in the singular number. It was the philosophical and exegetical difficulties of the situation that gave birth to the doctrine of the Trinity. But as this is sometimes stated, it may be plausibly stigmatized as an attempt to explain the inexplicable and to define the indefinable. It may well be doubted whether the doctrine, in this form,

does not weaken rather than strengthen, at the present time, the creeds of orthodoxy. It may be freely conceded that the question how a monotheist can consistently recognize the existence of three more or less independent activities in the divine nature cannot be ignored; but to answer it by affirming that the Godhead comprises three persons who are yet not persons in the ordinary sense of the word, or in any sense that can be made intelligible, is really to give no answer at all. It is practically to evade the question by pushing the difficulty one step farther back.

It is said by some military critics that the chief reverses which befell the Union army on the second day at Gettysburg were due to the fact that one of the corps occupied a position in advance of the chosen and natural line of defense. It is maintained by the same authorities that the successes of the last day resulted from a change in the alignment which placed the whole army where strategically it belonged. Orthodoxy cannot do without a Trinity, which, as already explained, is a philosophical and an exegetical necessity, and forms the capstone of its theology. What it can do without is attempts to defend untenable propositions, to vindicate dubious theories which are far in advance of the logical requirements of the situation. All that can be known and all that need be claimed in reference to the deepest aspects of the doctrine in question may be summed up in some such definition as this: The foundation of

the Trinity is an incomprehensible fact in the divine nature which is aptly expressed by the figure Three. Nothing more than this need be asserted in order to meet the exigencies of the case, and nothing more really is asserted even in the most elaborate definitions of the Trinity when these are stated in terms that are comprehensible.

We may now review some of the grounds on which we are justified in regarding the incarnation as a doctrine which is at least entitled to philosophical respect.

The Darwinian theory implies that the human race is being gradually shaped into moral likeness to an invisible Being whose crowning attribute is unselfish love, and the lifelong experience of every man who is willing to subject this belief to the test of appropriate personal conduct will furnish him with a satisfactory proof of its soundness. But observation of the motives by which the human will is influenced and the moral character of men is improved convinces us that an exhibition of self-sacrifice and paternal love on the part of God is necessary for the development of the highest type of righteousness in mankind, and that such an exhibition can be given only by his taking upon himself, in some real sense, the nature of man. That such an act would be miraculous affords no fatal presumption against its having been performed, because a miracle, according to the admissions of candid writers, may be established by evidence in case a need has arisen which would justify a spe-

cial work of God, — a condition which would seem to have been fulfilled by such a case of imperative necessity as that which has just been described, — and because the miraculous element in the life of Christ has already been attested by evidence of extraordinary strength. A race of people which is widely conceded to have been gifted with a deeper theological discernment than has been possessed by any other that has appeared on the earth, whose religious inspiration is assigned by the most cultivated nations to the highest place, and who had been impregably fortified against idolatrous tendencies by an age-long process of natural selection, closed its prophetic career by producing a set of writings whose moral and religious teaching transcends that of all previous and all subsequent books, and which unite in creating an irresistible impression that these writers believed that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ. The character which they ascribe to him is divine, as is proved by the fact that it has been transferred to God, and is what men worship either consciously or unconsciously when they worship him ; while the incidents which attended the life and death of this man, as related by biographers whose fidelity in recording his words shows them to be competent and conscientious historians, do but strengthen the inevitable implications of the New Testament regarding his nature. This view of the person of Christ is so clearly taught by the fundamental documents of Christianity that it has been held

by an overwhelming majority of the church for more than eighteen centuries, and with such beneficent results that we are reduced to the alternative of either believing that an incarnation has taken place, or of persuading ourselves that a false doctrine has been the providential means of conveying to the human race its highest conception of the divine character and the most powerful ethical stimulus it has ever known.

These considerations would certainly seem to justify us in including this doctrine among those articles of faith which, as explained in the first chapter, every man is warranted in holding with the hope of having them verified by a later experience of their influence on his own life and on the religious development of his fellow men. If men are justified in adopting any religion whatever that is worthy of the name, we may be confident that the logical supports of the Incarnation remove it beyond the range of any sneer leveled at an antiquated theology or human superstition.

CHAPTER X

THE ATONEMENT

No doctrine of Christian theology has undergone more mutations or developed wider differences of opinion than the one now to be considered. No definition of the Atonement is given in the New Testament, which, indeed, as a rule, contains only the raw material out of which philosophical statements of belief have been wrought; and the attempts which have been made to explain rationally and satisfactorily the relation of Christ's life, sufferings, death, and resurrection to human needs are so diverse that they afford abundant proof of the difficulty that inheres in the subject.

Among the many expressions used by the sacred writers to describe the effect of Christ's work on human destiny, the word "ransom" is prominent. It was borrowed from the experiences of contemporary life, at a time when it must have been common to procure the freedom of slaves or of military captives by the payment of money. It is by no means strange, therefore, that an analogy should have been assumed to exist between such a proceeding and the sacrifice of Christ. It is not

surprising that the human mind in its gropings after the deeper reasons of his death should have surmised that it was a price paid to Satan for the abandonment of his claims upon humanity. According to this theory sin renders a man a slave to a powerful evil personality, a view to which the helplessness which men so often feel when pitting their enfeebled wills against an evil habit would, in an age of crude thought, easily adapt itself, and which would be sure to find confirmation in Christ's allusions to "the Prince of this world," and in various scriptural references to the power of Satan and the bondage of sin.

Another view of the Atonement seems to have been suggested by the conception of sin, in the Lord's prayer, as a debt, and of men, in the parable, as insolvent debtors. Such a conception would commend itself to many minds. The notorious inflexibility of creditors, the utter helplessness of the debtor class as a whole, the manifest impossibility of ever paying what imprisonment must keep one from ever earning, are facts which would naturally fit into the experiences of many a man who had become the victim of remorse, whose sins had been magnified and emphasized by an upbraiding conscience. To become a prey to the conviction that every evil act represents a failure to render to the Almighty an obedience to which he is entitled, and is consequently of the nature of a debt due to him which the transgressor can never discharge, and which the divine Creditor cannot

properly remit, was to be prepared to adopt a view of the Atonement in harmony with that idea. The only solution of his own difficulty which could occur to an imprisoned debtor would be found in his constant wish that somebody else would pay his debt. For such an event he would yearn by day, and he would dream of it by night. That the sufferings of Jesus were great enough to liquidate the otherwise hopeless moral indebtedness of the human race would seem to one who held the view of sin just suggested a plausible theory; and, in an age which was neither critical nor profound, it was likely to win a wide acceptance.

What is known as "the governmental theory" has had able and distinguished advocates. It regards the death of Christ as satisfying the divine law against sin, not because it was the actual penalty which the law exacted, but because the sufferings involved in it were so great that the law would not be dishonored although the full punishment threatened by it should not be inflicted. The principle on which it is supposed to operate has been illustrated by the case of a military commander who, to put an end to single combats between his soldiers and those of the hostile army, made a law that any man who should accept a challenge to a duel of that kind should be deprived of his eyesight. His own son disobeyed the law and killed his antagonist. The father, to preserve respect for his law and, at the same time, to indulge his parental instincts, resorted to a

compromise. He destroyed one of his own eyes and one eye of his son. It is maintained that by this device as much was effected as would have resulted from a strict execution of the law; that, in view of the great sacrifice he had himself made, no one would be likely to suspect afterwards either that he was devoid of love for his children or that his laws could be broken with impunity. So, although the penalty of eternal death, which was believed to have been incurred by all mankind because that all had sinned, was not inflicted on the followers of Christ, yet his death involved so vast a sacrifice on the part of the supreme Law-giver that leniency towards them would bring no discredit on the divine law. Neither the veracity of God as a legislator nor his paternal love for his creatures could be impeached, it is said, since the one had been vindicated by the death of Christ as effectually as it would have been had the law been mercilessly enforced, while the other had received a most eloquent and touching illustration.

It is the so-called "moral theory," however, that wins most favor with advanced theological thinkers at the present time. It finds the efficacy and meaning of Christ's life in the stimulus which his example and character have imparted to the conscience and moral ambition of his followers. His death is the dark background which brings out into clearer relief the beauty of his holiness, but it is devoid of sacrificial import. The Atonement, as thus explained, is not usually conceived as vicarious; but

as it necessarily implies that without the self-sacrifice and heroic righteousness of Jesus the human race would have lacked its highest moral motive, there would seem to be a sense in which that adjective might properly be applied to the theory. If it is true that but for the sufferings and death of Christ those who have been morally quickened by his teachings would have continued in their sins until they had reached that state of spiritual insensibility which may be called the death of the soul, it is as pertinent to affirm that he died in their place as it would have been had his death been substituted for theirs in any other sense of the word.

Each of these theories and others that might be named have been met by serious objections. The first accords to evil too large a power, and elevates Satan to a level with the Ahriman of the old Persian dualism. The second implies that our obligations to God have been discharged for us once for all, and gives color to the suspicion that nothing is now required of the Christian in the way of obedience to divine statutes.

The third, while professing to honor the veracity of God, actually impugns it. He does not keep his word, and the device which is said to have enabled him to break it without loss of honor cannot be admitted to have had that effect. The military commander in the illustration could perhaps be defended for tampering with his own law. It might be urged that a complication had arisen

which he could not have been expected to foresee when he published his law. But it cannot be supposed that an omniscient Being could thus be taken by surprise. The theory under consideration requires us to believe that God threatened to punish all sinners with endless death, although he purposed, at the same time, not to punish some of them in that way, but to accept in their case the sacrifice of Christ as exempting them from all judicial retribution whatever. He promulgates a sweeping ordinance with a mental reservation. It would be hard to satisfy most minds that such a proceeding would comport with the moral dignity of the Ruler of the universe.

A serious objection to the theory is found also in the fact that no such law as it assumes to exist has ever been generally published. The theory is meaningless unless it can be shown that God has definitely pledged himself to pronounce sentence of eternal death on every one who has violated his statutes by so much as a single sin. His distributive justice and his veracity would not otherwise be involved. It would be necessary, also, if the theory is to be worthy of its name, if it is to avail itself of the analogy of human governments, that such a law as it must assume should be universally known. The common maxim that ignorance of the law excuses no one cannot be recognized as applicable here. It is at the best but a confession of human weakness, an exposure of the limited discernment of earthly judges. It declares

only a necessary policy of human tribunals. Ignorance of the law does excuse at the bar of conscience many an offence which the courts must punish. It can hardly be supposed that the legislative resources of the Almighty are so slight that he could not make known so tremendous an ordinance to every moral agent. Even if it should be urged that the Jews might have found after the captivity such a law in Ezekiel's words, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," or even earlier in the threat in Genesis, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," it is evident that the Gentiles did not have that opportunity. It would hardly seem consistent with any worthy idea of divine justice to hold that the great bulk of the human race had been condemned to hopeless death for breaking a statute of which they had never heard. They could not be said to have had a fair chance, if they had been kept in ignorance of the penalties which had been attached to disobedience.

The theory can be very much improved by regarding sin as a violation of a law of nature rather than an infringement of an express divine commandment. It might be argued that the first wrongful act disturbs unfavorably the balance of human nature and begins a process of moral deterioration which will continue indefinitely. Every act that is done is repeated more and more easily. Every sin, therefore, tends to perpetuate itself by increasing the propensity to sin. As recurrent

acts eventually form habits which in time become hopelessly fixed, a single sin is but the prelude to an unchangeable evil character. As James traces out the process, "Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death." The man is the victim of natural law as truly as he would have been had he begun to slide down a mountain side and acquired at last an uncontrollable momentum which ended by carrying him over a precipice.

Now, to counteract this increasing downward tendency in those who have sinned, the natural law to which they are in bondage must be counteracted by the introduction of a new moral force. The direction of the soul's development must be changed from evil to good. The man must be placed in such a relation to the law of character that it will make him better and better instead of worse and worse. There is as much of promise in it as there is of menace. It will just as surely render the goodness of a good man habitual as it will confirm the badness of a bad man. All that is needed in order to transform it into a beneficent influence is that the balance of the human will should be inclined towards righteousness.

Regeneration is commonly understood in the Christian Church to involve such a change in the moral bent of the human soul. It is generally viewed as a supernatural event, as a new impetus

given to the moral nature of a man by God himself. It is, therefore, somewhat of the nature of a miracle, the manifestation of a force which is outside the recognized system of psychological laws.

But such an interruption of the regular order of nature, such a reversal of the natural consequences of sin, might produce unfavorable results. It would tend to cast some doubt on the stability of the law of character. It introduces an element of uncertainty into the fundamental postulate on which moral science must rest. Ground has been furnished for the suspicion that other laws of nature may be set aside by a divine fiat. A step has been taken in the direction of encouraging men to look for miracles as a means of saving them from the natural consequences of their own bad deeds.

To avoid this danger the regeneration of man must be stamped as unique. It must take place under such circumstances as will leave no doubt in any mind that it is an exceptional event. An incarnation, a divine sacrifice, with which it is inseparably associated, it might be said, would have that effect. Such an event would illustrate most vividly the attachment of God to the established order of nature, for it would show him to be unwilling to depart from it without subjecting himself to unspeakable suffering. It would emphasize also his transcendent love for mankind through the magnitude of the sacrifice he would be willing to undergo in man's behalf. There is no question

here of vindicating the divine veracity, for he has given no pledge that the course of nature shall remain uniform. Nor is his honor as a lawgiver imperiled, for he has condoned no violation of a public statute. The only divine attributes that are in conflict — to borrow the old phraseology — are his love for men and the wisdom which is expressed in the persistence of natural law; and the Atonement, as thus conceived, would honor both far less ambiguously than colliding attributes are honored by the governmental theory in its present form. And it is possible that some such view of the Atonement as this might meet the needs of any who are constrained to believe that sin cannot be pardoned even on repentance without the agency of a divine sacrifice.

The fourth theory fails to explain satisfactorily Christ's own implications as to the meaning of his work and the interpretation of it given by contemporary apostles and evangelists, who may be fairly supposed to have had at least some knowledge on this point.

Moreover, a perfect moral example is not of itself competent to reform the human race. The world has had many living illustrations of a high type of virtue which did not secure a general imitation. Nor is it historically true that the moral character and ethical teachings of Jesus have been the chief influence to which are due the spread of Christianity and the consequent elevation of man's moral ideals. It is even now charged in some

quarters against almost the whole of the Christian Church that it sets creeds above character and faith above righteousness. In the sermons of successful evangelists from the days of the apostles to the present time, the perfect example of Jesus is not used as the principal motive with which to sway the human will. The Atonement viewed objectively is the influence by which men are made *at one* with God, and it is undeniable that whatever progress has been achieved in that direction was not initiated by and is not primarily due to the power of Christ's moral example and precepts.

It does not follow, however, that we must select one of the various theories that have been propounded and defend it as the only correct one, or that we must discard them all because of the difficulties with which they are separately incumbered. The very fact that they have been held and that each of them has, perhaps, many adherents in the world to-day, might suggest that there is a practical religious truth in every one of them. We may safely infer that if we can discover in them some common element, some adaptedness to the spiritual needs of human nature in which they all share, we have found the true theory of the Atonement, or at least all that is essential to it.

It is a very common belief among men, especially among those whose consciences are troubled by the memory of their misdeeds, that repentance does not of itself afford a sufficient ground for divine forgiveness. A conviction, or at least a suspicion,

is quite likely to be cherished that their sins have erected a barrier between them and their Maker which cannot be removed even by a subsequent virtuous life. It is not necessary for us to spend much time in investigating the soundness of this very prevalent human opinion, in inquiring whether it reflects with any considerable accuracy the real facts of the case. We need not stop to ask whether the parable of the Prodigal Son would require to be supplemented by some act of vicarious sacrifice on the part of the father, or by some propitiatory rite on the part of the returning profligate, before it could be safely commended to a penitent man as a true picture of the way of salvation. It cannot be doubted, especially by those who are familiar with the workings of human minds under the influence of remorse, that a very serious drawback to the reformation of many a guilty person is created by the fear which he feels that his wrongdoing has interposed an obstacle in the way of his salvation which no righteousness that he may now acquire will overcome. The result is that he is in danger of being discouraged by the seeming uselessness of any efforts that may be made by him to reunite himself with God.

That such a belief in the unpardonable nature of sin should be very widely entertained was to be expected. The human race has been educated for untold generations to regard law as something which cannot be broken with impunity. The child is no sooner able to distinguish right from

wrong than it is subjected to commands and prohibitions which are not usually to be set at naught without punishment. The man finds himself hedged in on every side by civil statutes, of which the penalties are seldom, if ever, relaxed. He becomes familiar with the cases of criminals who have long evaded the pursuit of justice and have even become — at least, to all outward appearance — respectable citizens, but who fall at last into the clutches of the law and are inexorably condemned to punishment. He sees a broken ordinance mercilessly exacting retribution, in spite of the sufferings of innocent women and children whom the culprit has involved in his own fall. He sees judges who are naturally compassionate and tender-hearted, who even shed tears when it becomes their duty to pass sentence on their fellow men, who, nevertheless, have no power to remit punishment even in cases where clemency would seem to be demanded, and who are constrained to trample under foot every private instinct of humanity and pity in the name of justice and social order. It is no wonder, then, if such experiences, combined with whatever influence in the same direction he may have inherited from a hundred generations which have had a similar education, make law to him synonymous with implacable vengeance, a symbol of an unappeasable monster which once offended can never be satisfied until the delinquent has been devoured. The character of Javert in “*Les Misérables*” may be regarded

as an embodiment of the spirit of the criminal law, and his suicide only emphasizes the common belief that law must have its victim. As it has generally manifested itself in human history, law is an impersonal, inflexible something, which, deaf to all entreaties, to all promises of amendment, to all appeals for mercy grounded on the fact of a changed life, relentlessly calls for retribution, and which, even if it is eluded, knows not what it is to forgive.

It is but natural that men, having been born and bred, as it were, with this conception of law, having grown up in a social atmosphere that was saturated with it, should have a similar idea of the law of God; that they should come to regard it as something which even the love of a heavenly Father cannot mitigate. It is not strange if, when remorse is painting their sins in the darkest colors, and they are overawed by the majesty of the sublime Being against whom they have offended, they should feel that the immutable ordinances of heaven exclude them from all hope of forgiveness. The sense of alienation from God which possesses them at such times, the conviction that they are outcasts from his presence, is associated in their minds with an inability to forgive themselves, with a feeling that they are justly served, and that they have no right to look for any alleviation of their condition.

That such a view of the attitude of God towards them is logically necessary cannot be successfully

maintained. It may be due rather to the phenomenon of association of ideas than to any process of sound reasoning, to an assumed analogy between the jurisprudence of earth and that of heaven rather than to the obvious teachings of nature and revelation. Even in the Old Testament, with its underlying law according to which a New Testament writer could "almost say all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission," intimations are not wanting of the efficacy of repentance and righteousness when not accompanied by expiatory sacrifices. One of them forms the central idea of the Book of Jonah. When the people of Nineveh repented of their sins, "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and did it not." The colloquy between Nathan and David would seem to be another case in point. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." No difficulty in the way of divine forgiveness is here suggested; nothing more is needed apparently as a preparation for it than a change of heart. And Micah's summary of religious duty is of a like tenor: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" There is no hint in these words of obstacles to salvation which must be removed

by something besides the practice of the virtues enjoined. And so in the New Testament. The parable of the Prodigal Son has already been referred to. The Sermon on the Mount may be cited also, which calls only for obedience, and says nothing to imply that this will not of itself be sufficient.

Nor does natural religion constrain us to believe that sin is essentially unpardonable or can be pardoned only with difficulty. It is possible to abuse the human system until it becomes a hopeless wreck. There are doubtless limits to what may be called the forgiveness of nature. But how many sins against the laws of health have been remitted as a result of simple obedience! How often it has proved true when the health has been broken by excesses that it may be restored merely by a return to correct habits! If we regard natural law as only the established method of divine action in the material world,—and no other conception of it would be serviceable in the present instance,—we can only say that analogy suggests the possibility of a man's hopelessly alienating himself from God, but does not teach that repentance is necessarily incapable of winning divine pardon.

Still, even if a man's conviction to the contrary does not correspond to any external reality, it must be dealt with all the same. Even if sin creates no gulf between man and God which cannot be bridged by a penitent life, the fact that most men persistently believe otherwise becomes for

them as serious a barrier to moral reformation and growth as would exist if it were true that the Almighty could not forgive even a penitent man without first vindicating his distributive justice by a miraculous and stupendous sacrifice. So long as men are convinced that there are difficulties in the way of their salvation which no effort on their part can remove, it makes no material difference whether these are imaginary or real, subjective or objective, they need to be taken out of the way. The mental condition itself must have an atonement. In other words, before the man can feel that there is any encouragement for him to abandon his sin and to enter into a life-long battle with temptation, something must happen, some influence must be brought to bear on him, which will enable him to rid himself of the fatal idea that his case is hopeless, or at least of discouraging difficulty.

Now it is precisely this effect which the death of Christ, when taken in connection with his whole extraordinary career, produces. Even if it did not serve to annihilate any obstacle to human welfare which stood in the way of God himself, — a point on which men may and will differ, — it did destroy an impediment to religious action in the human mind, and by so doing added new vigor to the spiritual growth of mankind.

The power by which this result was achieved resides in the fact that remission of sins has been promised in connection with a series of events which is, at the same time, so impressive, so unique,

and so mysterious as to suggest to the startled imagination endless hopeful possibilities. A being whose character has furnished the most highly developed portion of the human race with its highest ethical ideal, whose life was so near to the life of God that it seemed to emit sparkles of omnipotence, whose death, according to all accounts, was a transition to a visible divine glory, whose whole history stamps him as a being immeasurably higher than man, whose own utterances combined with those of his apostles place him on an equality with God himself, who is regarded by almost all the church as an incarnation of the Deity, has declared that his self-sacrifice has rendered possible the salvation of every soul.

That he does not make clear in what manner this effect has been wrought is immaterial. What the penitent man needs is not so much a definite and precise explanation of the process by which God reconciles his grace and his justice as the ability to believe that in some way he has done so ; and this can be had in the cases of most men only through the aid of some occurrence which is impressive and mysterious enough to afford an unlimited range for speculation and hope. The more discouraging a man's conception of the implacability of law is, the vaster needs to be the suggestiveness of the event on which he founds his expectation of divine pardon. A solemn affirmation that the way is open for any man to return to the Father has been made by one whose personal character guarantees his

veracity, and the circumstances of whose life are calculated to forestall all doubt as to his knowledge. The statement has been emphasized and enforced by such evidences of supernal power and wisdom in him who made it as may well disarm any objection growing out of the supposed difficulty or impossibility of the result said to have been accomplished. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, his miracles, his ethical teachings, the sublime origin ascribed to him, afford a new and larger idea of the divine resources, as it were, and thus encourage the belief that even so arduous a work as human salvation is apt to seem to him who most feels his need of it may not, after all, be too hard for God.

It is not necessary, therefore, to insist, in order to save the supposed implication of certain Scripture texts, that it is impossible for God to pardon sin on the mere condition of repentance, that the way to his favor has not always been as open as was that of the returning prodigal to his early home. Nor need we be especially concerned to deny that such is the case. Whether this view be correct or not, the texts referred to are equally useful and necessary. They meet a demand of human nature. Adapting themselves to the convictions of the great mass of humanity, irrespective of the question as to the soundness of these convictions, they express an inspiring truth in language which satisfies the cravings of innumerable hearts. Doing away with the depressing fear that

sin is virtually unpardonable by the assurance that an act of commensurate magnitude on the part of God has rendered it pardonable, these passages impart an equal stimulus to the soul that receives them whether the obstacle, which according to their teaching has been surmounted, had its existence in the mind of God or only in the erroneous theological opinions of men.

That human curiosity would be active in regard to the details of the process of reconciliation, the very nature of the human mind would lead us to expect, and, as already intimated, the explanations adopted would take their color from the different impressions made on human minds by sin itself. If, owing to previous education or a native mental tendency, a man should refer the supposed desperateness of his spiritual outlook to the dominion which a powerful evil spirit had secured over him, he would naturally be inclined to accept the theory of the Atonement first given. If, for any reason, his moral condition should seem to him analogous to the condition of an insolvent debtor, he would prefer the second. If his conception of God as a ruler should suggest certain parallels to his own case in civil governments, he would be drawn to the third. While, if he saw no hindrances to divine forgiveness save his own impenitence and perverse moral temperament, the fourth alone would have any attractions for him. These various explanations of the way in which Christ saves men bear no resemblance to one another. Not one of

them, as already pointed out, is free from objections. Every one of them, no doubt, has been of immense service to Christianity. We should naturally infer, therefore, that all of them are in some sense true, though each one of them is in some respects false. The one point in which they all agree is this: that whatever the obstacle may be which stands in the way of divine grace, whether it be in the law of God or only in the mind of the transgressor, it need cause no trouble to him who is willing to live a true life. Theologians may argue and speculate as to the grounds on which sin is remitted, but practical religion has no concern with the results which they may reach. Its purposes are amply served by the fact that the figures, the language, the promises which are associated with the Atonement, suffice to free minds of every class from the fear that sin has raised between them and God a barrier which cannot be torn down.

This may be called the *subjective* theory of the Atonement, and the various teachings of the Scriptures on this subject may easily be interpreted in harmony with it. It explains the prominence which is given to the blood of Christ in the New Testament. Whatever may have been the original meaning and purpose of animal or human sacrifices, they came at last to have an expiatory significance. They tacitly recognized the existence of a chasm between man and God which could only be bridged by suffering. It may not be necessary

again to suggest that this chasm may have been wholly imaginary, or to affirm that it would be none the less discouraging on that account. The vail which barred the chosen people from the Holy of Holies may have been only a visible symbol of a subjective condition ; its effect on their feelings, however, would not have been different had it represented an actual barrier outside of themselves which God had placed between them and himself. If the ethical commandments of the Mosaic code had not been supplemented by a ritual of blood, the sense of estrangement from Jehovah which had thus already found expression in a material symbol must have led, before the moral life of the nation became fixed, to a general abandonment of the law. Without something in their religion to mitigate their feeling of alienation from God, without the agency of sacrifices, which had come to be used so generally in the world as propitiatory rites, it does not seem probable that the children of Israel would have retained their belief that they were, in a special sense, the people of God, or would have had faith enough to cling to a law which had been hopelessly broken so many times. But for their sacrificial rites, which seemed to them in some measure to keep Jehovah in touch with them notwithstanding repeated transgressions on their part, the casting away of the tables of stone by Moses because of a single act of popular disobedience would have been prophetic of the fate which their law would have encountered in time at the hands of the whole people.

It was to Jews and pagans familiar with the expiatory meaning and use of blood, to cults which deemed sacrifices inseparable from effective worship, that the gospel came. With these religious preconceptions it must reckon. It must meet that craving for reconciliation with heaven which had learned to still itself to some extent with the pain of a dying victim. Apart from any influence which the tragic sufferings of Christ may be supposed by some to have had on the governmental action of God, they were necessary in order to meet the demands of human nature. An atonement without blood must have failed to win acceptance with Jew and Gentile alike.

The different aspects in which Christ is presented to men in the New Testament appeal to as many wants and desires of their moral nature. He is called, or calls himself, by names which are so numerous and so suggestive that no need of the human soul would seem to have been forgotten, no figure to have been neglected which would make real his redemptive work to any man. He is Bread, Light, the Fountain-head of Living Water; he is a Propitiation, a Ransom, a Mediator, an Advocate, a Redeemer; he is a Corner-stone, a Foundation, a Door; he is a Shepherd, a High Priest, a Bishop; he is the Resurrection, the Way, the Truth, the Life. Whatever may be the truth which any man needs specially to believe in order to have the courage to commit himself to the lifelong guidance of his highest spiritual impulses, it

will be found expressed in some one or more of the attributes or offices ascribed to Christ. The diseases of the soul are as various as those of the body and require as many different remedies. The imagination clothes the vague yearnings of the spiritual nature in all manner of forms which are borrowed from the analogies of physical and mental experiences. The Atonement recognizes them all, and offers the appropriate healing medicines. If a man conceives that he is separated from God by his want of a righteousness for which he hungers and thirsts, Christ comes to him as the Bread which came down from heaven and as the giver of a well of water springing up unto eternal life. If he is kept from his Maker by his sense of the awful contrast which exists between his character and that of the Most High, Christ is offered to him as a Mediator and as an Advocate with the Father. If he cannot rid himself of the idea that it will be hard for the Almighty to lay aside the deep resentment which he cherishes towards him on account of his many sins, Christ is declared to be a Propitiation for them. If his difficulties are intellectual and he is troubled to know, amid the manifold collisions of human opinion, on what he may build a life that will lift him up into the knowledge of God and the light of eternal truth, Christ is presented to him as the Foundation and the Chief Corner-stone. And so with the other titles and powers ascribed to the Son of man. Some of these will prove helpful to one class of

persons and some to those of a different class; and the private definitions and conceptions of the Atonement, its practical bearings on human conduct, will be as multifarious as are the facets of many-sided human nature with which it comes in contact; but in point of fact it will be found to be a broad generalization which covers every need of the soul and anticipates every rhetorical expression in which a spiritual want may clothe itself.

By as much, therefore, as we are constrained to admit that the moral discouragement which is almost inseparable from a sense of sin is a serious drawback to the proper ethical development of the human race, and that it can be effectually removed only by some assurance which has obviously behind it the authority of God, by so much are we impelled to recognize still another knot in the drama of man's evolution and a new reason to anticipate a miraculous intervention in his behalf.

CHAPTER XI

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (PSYCHOLOGICAL)

CHRISTIANITY aims to promote disinterested conduct. The virtue which it inculcates is unselfishness. Its moral ideal is a love which seeketh not its own. The Christian must not be content to do good to those who do good to him, to lend to those of whom he hopes to receive, to invite to his feast those who can make him a recompense by bidding him in return. Well-doing, according to the gospel, cannot be grounded in the expectation of reward. Goodness, to be approved by Christ, must be cultivated for other than personal ends.

The righteousness which is commended in the New Testament is, in a peculiar sense, divine ; it is called the righteousness of God. It contains elements which distinguish it broadly from much that passes current in the world as goodness. Men may be ignorant of it even while possessing a certain zeal for God and seeking to establish a righteousness of their own. It exceeds that of the conventional moral standards of the time of Christ by as much as spiritual success surpasses spiritual failure ; “I say unto you, that except your right-

eousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is a benevolent, unselfish principle of action, a love which is superior to the promptings of self-interest and native impulse. He who has it in its perfection is equal to the task of blessing those that curse him, of doing good to those that hate him, of praying for those that persecute him. It has found emphatic expression in the apostle's words, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Whatever appeals to selfish motives the gospel may seem to make in its promises and threats, its ultimate aim is to lay the foundations of human character in a love which casteth out fear, in a virtue which is not open to the sneer, "Doth Job fear God for naught?" "Christ died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again."

The conception of moral obligation which has just been outlined is recognized as sound by the ethical philosophy of the present time. What is called "altruism" in current discussions of human duty and of moral evolution is generally only another name for the unselfish conduct inculcated by Christianity. The Sermon on the Mount, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, are commonly accepted by writers on ethics as embodying correct ethical ideals. It may be confidently

expected that the New Testament conception of righteousness will eventually be adopted by all religions and by every moral philosophy.

Two obstacles stand in the way of every one who is disposed to acquire such a righteousness as has just been described. One of them is found in the tendency of sin to make moral and religious conduct selfish, to degrade the ideals even of those who are ambitious to please God. It is to the consideration of this that the present chapter is devoted.

All men are naturally under some moral law. It may be written and elaborate, it may be unwritten and incomplete, it may be only a vague suspicion that one ought to do better than he is doing. By the deeds of the law Paul means primarily those wrought in obedience to the Jewish code, although to those prescribed by the Gentile conscience he would not refuse the name. The idea of law which he had in mind while writing his epistles seems to be a certain standard of moral action through perfect conformity to which the divine favor could be obtained. It is essentially characteristic of all law to be satisfied with nothing less than a perfect observance of all its requirements. Whoever, therefore, is seeking peace with God through complete obedience to special moral obligations which sum up his idea of religious duty, whether they have previously been given in writing or only represent the utterances of his own conscience, is living, according to the spirit of Paul's teachings, under a religious law.

There is necessarily a threat in every moral law. The code of Moses expressly denounced a curse against every one who should not continue in all the things written in the book of the law to do them. But the comminatory element is not wanting even where the law is simply the particular standard of righteousness set up by individual consciences. In this there is a latent menace which is brought to the surface by every act of disobedience. No man can believe it to be his duty to conform perfectly to a certain rule of moral conduct without feeling, in times of temptation, that he is treading on dangerous ground. He cannot fail to entertain the suspicion that disagreeable consequences will accrue to him from any disloyalty on his part to his sense of right; and this will have for him all the force of an authoritative warning against wrong-doing. It makes no particular difference whether it is due to a natural association of ideas of the kind explained in the last chapter, to the results of previous experiences, or to a direct communication from God; the fact that he has it will have its influence and must be dealt with accordingly. Whether, therefore, a man derives his sense of duty from the Mosaic statutes or from his inbred ideas of moral obligation, he is to all intents and purposes under a law which he feels he cannot break without exposing himself to evil consequences.

A perfect man, whose virtue had been confirmed by time and practice, would remain perfect under

the strictest moral law that could be imposed upon him. There would be a just proportion between his moral powers and his moral obligations. Righteousness would be natural to him and therefore easy. Neither would it be a matter of any practical concern to him that sin has been authoritatively forbidden with threats. Having no disposition or desire to commit it, his conduct would not be influenced by denunciations against it. There would be no point of contact between him and the comminatory phrases of the law. He would continue perfect because he would love to be perfect, because he would have no inclination to cease from being so. He would be, therefore, as really independent of the law as he would be were he not living under it. No man who has no desire to kill feels that his liberty is abridged by civil statutes against murder. No truly honest man is influenced in his conduct by legislative enactments against stealing. No truthful man gives his evidence in a court of justice with any thought of the penalties attached to perjury. A good man refrains from killing or stealing or bearing false witness, not because it will be dangerous for him to commit these crimes, not because the law will punish him if he perpetrates them, but because he loves virtue too well to transgress its requirements. And so a person of confirmed perfection of character, living under the comprehensive law of God, would be as untrammelled by selfish motives in his moral conduct as he would be if he had never

heard of such a thing as a threat against wrongdoing. He would obey God because he would love to obey him. There would be no room in his soul for a selfish conception of duty. When a ship is making good headway under steam she does not usually carry sail, for she is already moving faster than the wind. There is no motive power in a stern breeze blowing five or ten knots an hour for a vessel which is already making fifteen or twenty. And so it would be bootless to try to get a man to serve God by picturing to him the terrible consequences of sin if he is already serving him perfectly from love of holiness. Perfect love has cast out fear as a moral incentive, or rather has kept it from manifesting itself, by propelling the soul beyond its reach. He may use the law educationally, that is, as a means of ascertaining what specific moral acts he ought to perform ; but when these have been learned he will do them gladly and with no thought of the danger of leaving them undone. It is only in this way and to such a person that righteousness can come through the law.

But if the person who has just been described should, for any cause, commit a single sin, the face of his moral affairs would be wholly changed, a complete revolution would be wrought in his moral character. A sense of ill-desert would become lodged within him. He would be unable to think of God or of his spiritual outlook without misgivings. He would be powerless to banish from his

mind the suspicion that he was in danger of never recovering his inward peace, of losing heaven in fact. A feeling of insecurity, which could never have found its way into the consciousness of a perfect man for the want of anything in him to create it, would become a permanent fixture in the soul of one who had once transgressed the law of duty. He would no longer be able to regard the rewards of righteousness as blessings that would fall to him as a matter of course. The possibility that he had forfeited them altogether would be infallibly suggested to him by the fact that he had lost his perfect innocence.

The effect thus produced upon his character would be radical and pronounced. It would amount to nothing less than a complete moral overturn, a substitution of selfish for unselfish considerations as a ground of moral action; for as heaven must now be conceived by him as something that is liable to be lost, it will seem to him eminently a thing to make sure of. Hence the rewards of virtue will assume greater importance in his eyes than virtue itself, for he knows that a failure to obtain them will be fatal to his happiness. A single transgression by making him feel unsafe has lifted the thought of his safety to the chief place among his religious motives. The foundations of his character have been shifted from love of righteousness to love of self.

To illustrate: a man may pursue a trade or a craft from pure love for it so long as his circum-

stances are such as to preclude the idea of his ever coming to want ; but let him lose his property, let him, as a result, become anxious as to his future means of subsistence, and his calling will cease to be altogether or chiefly a recreation. It will be in danger of degenerating into a wholly mercenary pursuit, into a sordid means of earning his bread and butter ; and his prevailing inquiry concerning it will be likely to be, not, How shall I conduct it so as to bring out, by means of it, the best that is in me, but, How shall I manage it so as to make the most money out of it ? The artist, in such a case, will be tempted to lower his standards to the level of a vulgar taste ; the author will be in danger of forsaking the truth in order to cater to the literary whims of the multitude. Self-interest is brought to the forefront as a motive, and, as a result, it leaves its impress on the quality of the subsequent work.

And so a man would practice righteousness in utter self-forgetfulness and in a spirit of the purest love so long as perfect innocence should keep him free from the thought of spiritual peril ; but let him feel that his moral failures have clouded his prospects of reaching heaven and the quality of his moral conduct will deteriorate. Holiness will practically cease to be in his estimation something to be cultivated for its own sake. He will view it as a species of investment, as a means of obtaining present comfort and future happiness. In one of La Fontaine's fables, a poor cobbler who disturbs

a rich banker by his ceaseless songs is silenced by a gift of money. He has now something to lose, and his anxiety about it takes from him all desire to sing. So when heaven is apprehended by a man chiefly as something which he is liable to lose, the fear of falling short of it plucks the element of joy out of his virtue and imparts a selfish hue to his whole conception of righteousness. Obedience to God he views as a means of benefiting himself. He may be a moral man, — that is, he may conform to the standard of outward deportment which is recognized in the community in which he lives; but his conduct proceeds from motives which derive their ethical complexion from his predominant interest in himself.

This is the state in which every man must find himself when he begins to concern himself about his moral condition and spiritual destiny. Whether he be Jew or Gentile, his knowledge of the fact that he has disobeyed the moral law under which he lives has made him sensible of the threat expressed or implied in it. He cannot but fear lest, having failed to do all that he ought to have done, the best that he can now do will not be enough to win divine favor. Consequently, his distinctively religious acts proceed from his dread of personal loss. The desire to be safe influences him in all his efforts to serve God. He does not regard salvation as deliverance from sin so much as exemption from the penalties and consequences of sin. His anxiety about his future welfare out-

weighs, as a principle of action, his desire for holiness. His virtue, therefore, is selfish and consequently is not, in the Christian sense, virtue at all. His excessive eagerness to make sure of heaven, or of the friendship of the heavenly powers, defeats itself as a morally purifying influence by lending a mercenary hue to all his religious conduct.

How, then, is one who has brought himself into this condition to escape from it? When he feels that his moral imperfections have exposed him to the dangers which he deems inseparable from a broken law, how is this fact to be deprived of its natural tendency to promote a selfish desire for personal safety and happiness to the position of a supreme religious motive?

It will be useless to exhort him to forget himself and his fears and to act without reference to his spiritual misgivings. His sense of danger will swallow up all other considerations. It will ordinarily be futile to advise a person walking on slippery ice to dismiss all fear of falling, or to bid one who is reeling with giddiness on the edge of a precipice to exercise a better control over his nerves. A feeling of terror has made both insensible to all other motives. It has rudely taken precedence of all more rational incentives to action. And so the fear of losing the divine favor and eternal happiness will render him who feels it deaf to all encouraging exhortations. No one who suspects that his salvation is not assured will fail to

be influenced unfavorably in his religious action by his sense of spiritual peril.

There would seem, then, to be no way to effect the moral reformation of one who is conscious of sin save by removing the cause of his alarm. What he needs in order to become free to practice virtue for its own sake is immunity from the fear of failure. He must be convinced that he is safe, that whether he is succeeding well or ill in his efforts to purify his character, he will not in the end be excluded from the kingdom of God. Many a man who has in him the making of a good workman will forget his cunning if his employer's eye is upon him and he feels that a blunder will cost him his place. He needs to be left to himself, to be freed from everything that is likely to make him timid and nervous, in order that he may act naturally. So, many a man whose life would be a moral failure if he believed that his faults were being treasured up against him by an offended God and were destroying all his prospects of reaching heaven would leave behind him an altogether different record if he could feel that his moral awkwardness was not rendering him any the less certain to win his salvation in the end.

Now it is to this very fact that the mission of Christ bears an appropriate relation. It was to enable men who might be attracted by the beauty of holiness or repelled by the ugliness of sin to acquire a genuine, unselfish righteousness that the gospel has been proclaimed. To use the phrase-

ology of a previous illustration, its purpose was, in part, to relieve the apprentices of God from all spiritual nervousness and unnaturalness in order that they might do their best work in achieving a likeness to the divine character. An affirmation was made in the earth under circumstances which have riveted upon it the attention of more than half a hundred generations that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The assertion has been made with many impressive accompaniments that he who believeth in Jesus Christ hath (already) eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. To all who are willing to cultivate that spirit of disinterested love which is the only true righteousness, Christianity declares that for them there is no law, that their spiritual safety is not conditioned on their ability to attain a certain standard of moral excellence, but that faith is reckoned to them for righteousness. It affirms that the honest acceptance of Christ as a religious guide will assure to them the blessings which they have been wont to associate with perfect obedience to the law of duty. For him who is disposed to practice holiness for its own sake the law is declared to have been virtually repealed in order that it may not make selfish and therefore frustrate the moral efforts which he purposes to put forth. Such is the teaching of Christianity in the texts, "There is no condemnation to

them which are in Christ Jesus;" "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death;" "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" "Ye are not under law, but under grace."

Evidently there is no way to come out from under the law save by believing the only being who has given any show of authority to the declaration that it is possible to be freed from it. The earnestness with which faith is enjoined throughout the Bible and the commendations which the sacred writers uniformly bestow upon it are explained, to a large extent, by the all-important fact that it is only by the exercise of faith that one can put himself into the condition which will be most favorable to his own spiritual development, that one will no longer be obliged to associate with thoughts of duty any demoralizing considerations suggested by the menaces of a broken moral law.

The doctrine we are now considering may be further illustrated, on its psychological side, by the case of a man who has fallen into the water. He is safe if he will dismiss all thought of danger; for his body is lighter than the element in which it is submerged, and will float if he will allow it to do so. Every pupil at a swimming-school is likely to be taught so much regarding himself in his very first lesson. Moreover, man, like almost every other animal, is a natural swimmer, and, in the case just supposed, he needs only to put in practice

an instinctive art in order to get ashore. If he has faith enough in these two facts to act upon them, it will save him. But if he is influenced only by the fear of death, he will raise his arms above his head and so depress his centre of gravity. The very efforts which he will make to preserve his life will only force him beneath the surface.

The gospel declares that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. It implies, also, that perfection of character is within ultimate reach of human effort. If any man will put confidence in these two propositions and serve God in order to make progress in righteousness rather than for the purpose of freeing his soul from jeopardy, his salvation is assured, and he will realize that he is steadily approaching the strand of a perfect love. But if he fails to accept those truths, his religious conduct will be merely a struggle to free himself from spiritual danger. In other words, it will be selfish, and will have no other effect than to sink him all the deeper in sin and peril. "The body of this death," which seemed to Saul, the Jew, too heavy to be kept afloat by his most strenuous moral exertions, seemed light enough to Paul, the Christian, when he had exchanged his selfish legalism for trust in the buoyant power of divine grace. The seventh chapter of Romans describes the splashings and floundering of a drowning man who discovers, at the last moment, that underneath him are the everlasting arms, and that his efforts to keep his head above

water are a needless waste of time and force. That sigh of relief which follows his recital of his terrific spiritual struggles, that grateful prayer, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," is the natural utterance of exhausted human nature when, after painful spiritual experiences, it has learned that the sole object to be gained by religious effort is not self-preservation but moral progress. When the same truth was thundered into the soul of Martin Luther, when his bewildered penances were ended by the inward voice which cried, "The just shall live by faith," a moral energy was set free which was destined to do more for the ethical and intellectual growth of the human race than any force which has come into operation in modern times.

The belief which will enable a man to free his moral conduct from the fatal element of selfishness every one may exercise. It is an act of the will in no wise different in nature from the volitions which all persons without exception put forth every day and almost every hour of their lives. As these do not rest on a scientific demonstration of their soundness, but arise out of the necessity that is laid on men of taking for granted most of the facts which they must use in their practical affairs, so the faith which removes from one the fear of the law need not be, at the outset, the product of an unanswerable train of reasoning. As explained in the first chapter, it is a perfectly rational act of the mind, if it is only an assumption cherished as a

means of arriving at experimental certainty. And faith as thus conceived it is comparatively easy for any one to exercise who is sincerely desirous of acquiring such a righteousness as the gospel approves.

For, in the first place, every such person is psychologically predisposed to put confidence in teachings which are favorable to his hopes. We see an illustration of this fact in the analogous case of almost any invalid who has been given up by his physician. He is prepared in advance to credit encouraging statements as to his prospect of getting well, no matter who may make them. He is ready to try any nostrum which any one may recommend. He will eagerly place himself in the hands of quacks, even, who make to him the absurdest promises. Many a patent medicine owes a large part of its sale, and many a medical charlatan a good portion of his practice, to this universal tendency on the part of sick people to believe representations which flatter their hopes of being cured. And this same human trait paves the way for what is theologically known as "saving faith." A man who feels that he is the victim of a desperate moral disease will be more or less inclined to listen favorably to any assurances which hold out to him a prospect of help. No man can undergo the spiritual experiences which are described in the seventh chapter of Romans without being brought by them into a condition in which it will be relatively easy for him to credit the assertion that there is balm in

Gilead. So much is proved by the readiness with which so many persons resort to the most extravagant and irrelevant religious rites in the effort to gain inward peace. The penances, bloody sacrifices, acts of cruel self-torture through which this end is sought have their parallel in the quack nostrums by the aid of which so many persons try to regain their health. The spiritual and the physical remedy alike bear witness to the presence in human nature of a predisposition to believe in whatever promises to meet its needs.

But, in the second place, belief in the doctrine under consideration is facilitated by certain special considerations which have already been adverted to in connection with the Atonement. It is the province of that conspicuous theological tenet to make faith easy for penitent men. The assertion that they have been transferred from the dominion of law to that of grace has behind it the sublime character of Jesus, the record of his startling works, the prophetic intimations of his coming which are discoverable in the utterances of Hebrew and Gentile seers, the story of the church's vast moral conquests, the religious experiences of innumerable Christian disciples. Circumstances have been providentially so ordered as to impress upon the heart and memory of man and to stamp indelibly on the history of the human race the imposing fact that justification through faith has been promised in the name of God by a Being whose origin, purity, majesty, and power were commensurate with

the grandeur of his message, and has been reiterated by an apostle whose personal sacrifices for his belief, whose heroic life, whose intellectual power, and whose claims to superhuman enlightenment unite to render him the grandest character which Christianity has as yet produced. These facts and others of a similar nature which might be cited reduce to a minimum the difficulties which sin and remorse are apt to throw in the way of Christian faith, and render it possible for any one who is looking for spiritual help to take the single narrow step which will suffice to bring him under the control of unselfish religious motives. And if we believe that only some extraordinary act of divine providence would make it possible for most men to trust an assertion that they are not under the law, we have encountered one more knot in human development and still another antecedent probability of the miracle.

An assurance that the virtual repeal of the law will not be abused by him for whom it has taken place, that his sense of safety will not result in an indifference, on his part, to morality and religion, is found in the fact that it is only because and while faith is exercised for the sake of righteousness that it transfers any one from the dominion of law to that of grace. It is this truth which Paul seems to have in mind in the answers that he gives to his own questions: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?"

“Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace?” “God forbid,” is his reply. “Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” It is thus taught clearly by him who interpreted the gospel in reference to the practical needs of the Gentile world that no man can get the benefits of this doctrine which is so prominently associated with his name who is not honestly committed to the service of Christ. And what he says in reference to his own countrymen is also in point. “By their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear.” Terror, which is inappropriate to a state of grace, may well be felt by one who is tempted to fall away from grace. Faith working through love is the steady stream of oil that makes smooth and safe the waters in which one sails ; but the threatening waves visible at intervals just beyond are warning him that it must not cease to flow. Belief in Christ is substantially inoperative except in so far as it stimulates and aids one to acquire the spirit of Christ.

What has been said in reference to the unselfish nature of the virtue which the gospel would promote through the agency of faith is not nullified by the fact that Jesus and the sacred writers make frequent appeals to the fear of punishment and the hope of reward. The real and deepest psycho-

logical effect of such appeals is not commonly understood. Much that has been said against frightening or bribing men to become righteous is only half true. It may be freely conceded that a virtue which is sustained solely by the hope of ultimate profit is not worthy of the name from the point of view of Christian ethics, whether the profit is to be reaped in this world or in the world to come. It is essentially selfish, and, therefore, is of the kind which the gospel aims to supplant. It need not be denied that a Christian who has no other reason for the hope that is in him than the fear that without it he will be debarred from happiness in the next life is only nominally a follower of Christ. He is really under the law still and not under grace. If he is not conscious in a gradually increasing measure of that love which casteth out fear, he has no evidence that the spirit of Christ is dwelling in him.

But while so much may be admitted to be true in the objections that are urged against efforts to bring men to Christ by appeals to selfish motives, there is another and very important side to the question. It is a psychological fact that an impending punishment often awakens a sense of guilt, and that a proffered reward frequently creates a feeling of ill-desert. Many a man has embezzled money from his employer for years without losing any sleep on account of an uneasy conscience, but when exposure and arrest came, the full magnitude of his wickedness dawned upon him. It is not un-

common in such cases for the criminal to loathe the crime more than he dreads the punishment of it ; and in this fact lies the justification of appeals in behalf of righteousness to the fear of consequences. They serve to direct attention to the moral defects in the conduct which is followed by such consequences.

It is not necessary to explain the underlying causes of the phenomenon. Whether it is due to a natural association of ideas which has become instinctive in the human mind through an experience centuries long that ill-desert and suffering go hand in hand, or to some other mental law, the fact is undeniable and may be easily corroborated by observation. It has been recognized by as good a psychologist as Shakespeare. When the three noblemen who had conspired to kill King Henry the Fifth are arrested just in time to nip their enterprise in the bud, Scroop says, —

“ Our purposes God justly hath discover’d ;
And I repent my fault more than my death ;
Which I beseech your highness to forgive,
Although my body pay the price of it.”

Cambridge adds, —

“ But God be thanked for prevention ;
Which I in sufferance heartily will rejoice,
Beseeching God and you to pardon me.”

And Grey concludes : —

“ Never did faithful subject more rejoice
At the discovery of most dangerous treason
Than I do at this hour joy o’er myself,
Prevented from a damned enterprise :
My fault, but not my body, pardon, sovereign.”

When the sense of fear has awakened remorse, the man has been brought into such a condition that he can be influenced by distinctively Christian motives, to which he would otherwise have proved insensible.

The effect of the hope of reward is practically the same. The first real and abiding sense of sin that I ever experienced was aroused, in my childhood, by a sudden appreciation of the beauty of heaven. It created in me a consciousness that I was far below the moral level of such a place, and an earnest determination to lift myself up to it. In fact, it marked a turning-point in my religious history. The same effect seems to have been produced on Peter when the perfect manhood of his Master was suddenly illumined by the lightning flash of a miracle, and he fell on his knees exclaiming, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

A ragged street-boy may not be troubled by the condition of his clothing until he is invited to some gathering where he is to meet only well-dressed people; then he will suddenly become conscious of his dilapidated appearance, and will feel, for perhaps the first time in his life, a desire to become clean and neat. The mental operation in his case is precisely the same as that described in the last paragraph. A realization of his unfitness has rendered the desire to become fit his ruling motive.

When the promises of the gospel have awakened in the mind of any man a hatred of sin or a yearn-

ing for holiness which has taken precedence of them as a motive to action, they have made it possible to influence his conduct by higher considerations than those of personal interest. When he has fairly begun to love righteousness for its own sake, his religion is no longer selfish, even though it is true that his selfishness first gave him his interest in it. If, however, the lower motives which originally led him to call himself a Christian do not give place to the love which seeketh not its own and which is independent of the expectation of reward, he has not yet entered into the liberty which is in Christ. It is only when an invitation to the feast makes the guest so sensitive to his moral raggedness that he puts on the wedding-garment of a disinterested righteousness that he has any right or permission to remain.

The need of eliminating selfish considerations from the practice of righteousness is one that is commonly recognized by those who are striving to reach their moral ideals. The mad woman, in the anecdote, who went through a town with a bucket of water in one hand and a torch in the other, crying that she was about to extinguish hell and burn up heaven in order that men might practice righteousness for its own sake, had method in her madness. Paul had the same purposes in view when he preached the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Jesus sought to compass the same ends when he said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." There was no difference between the

two in what they taught regarding the conditions of salvation. The doctrine we are considering is not to be got rid of by setting Paul aside as a marplot. It is imbedded in the very heart of Christianity, which owes its success to the fact that it furnishes penitent men with reasons for believing that God has accepted them, and so enables them to live unselfish and holy lives.

CHAPTER XII

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (PRACTICAL)

THE doctrine of Justification has been considered, in the previous chapter, with reference to the fact that faith is competent to remove the obstacle which is thrown in the way of man's moral development by the tendency of sin to make religious action selfish. This obstacle was shown to be mainly of a psychological nature, originating, as it does, in the strongest of the natural instincts, that of self-preservation. But there is another of a practical quality which grows out of the inherent difficulty of lifting the conduct up to the level of our ideals, and this also must be overcome by faith.

If the only ill effect produced by sin on the moral nature of a man were the introduction of selfish motives into his religious conduct, no second branch of this subject would have to be treated; but there are other ways in which wrong-doing degrades the soul, to which the aspect of justification already presented bears no special relation.

In the first place, a flaw in the moral character is sure to spread, for the psychological reason that a man will usually be less careful to preserve from injury that which has been already harmed than

he is to keep from harm that which is as yet uninjured. The contrast between perfect innocence and the smallest degree of guilt is far greater than that between some sinfulness and a slight increase of it. The resistance to be overcome, therefore, in committing a first sin is immeasurably greater than will be opposed to the temptation to sin a second time ; and as it was not great enough to preserve a perfect innocence, it will be too small to prevent an increase of wrong-doing. Everybody has had proof of this fact. It is verified by almost daily observation. It underlies the current warnings against the first glass, against the first downward step. The beginning of evil has often been compared to the first drop of water which finds its way through the dike ; it is the commencement of a slow but sure process of disintegration.

A further moral degeneration takes place because the consciousness of sin creates in the soul a certain animosity against the deliverances of the conscience which imparts a darker quality to the evil committed. It is a matter of common experience that men are apt to resent attempts that are made to induce them to perform a disagreeable duty. Few persons will welcome criticisms of their moral conduct or easily resist the impulse to hate those who have uttered them. Nor is the reason far to seek. These criticisms cause pain. It is painful to be reminded of a moral obligation which one is unwilling to discharge. It is extremely uncomfortable to have the sense of duty

come in collision with rooted inclinations, and it is but a natural instinct to conceive enmity against that which occasions the discomfort. Whether it be an individual, a religion, a church, or a moral law, it will be hated for the unhappiness it has caused; and as hatred naturally seeks revenge, there will be more or less of vindictiveness in the opposition which is manifested towards the disturbing influence.

It was this psychological fact apparently that Paul had in mind when he spoke of the law entering that sin might abound, and of sin through the commandment becoming exceeding sinful. It may shed some light, also, on his own moral condition when he consented to the death of Stephen, and when, changing a laudable zeal for his religion into a personal animosity against those who had embraced the new faith, he became "exceedingly mad" against them. We have here the natural workings of a mind that has caught a glimpse of a truth which cannot be accepted without an act of most painful self-sacrifice, another illustration of the profound fact which Jesus expressed in the words, "For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved," and in the explanation which he gives of the hostility that he encountered among his own countrymen and that his religion was to meet with among the Gentiles: "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil."

Once more, the entrance of sin into the soul is apt to impart a certain wildness to human conduct which has the effect of hastening moral degeneration. There would seem to be antecedently no reason why men should be worse than brutes. We seldom if ever detect in the lower animals any tendency to act unnaturally. All are strictly moral in the sense that they are obedient to the laws of their own nature. But man, the highest of them all, betrays an ingenuity in devising sins, an inordinate desire for original forms of wickedness, which needs to be accounted for. His crimes are often so inexplicable in the light of any temptations with which most persons are familiar that we deem them almost supernatural. We call them demoniac, and see in them a certain mystery of iniquity. They may perhaps be explained as bewildered efforts of the soul to fill up a conscious spiritual void, a misdirected application of an energy which has been diverted from the spiritual development of the man.

The effect of all these influences combined is to render the reformation of human nature a work of appalling difficulty. No one can seek to achieve the character which the gospel commends without soon becoming aware that the spirit of Christian morality is utterly opposed to the natural springs of human action. To try to live for others is to begin to learn how thoroughly the human will is dominated by selfish motives. It is a formidable undertaking to make over a man. "The truth is,"

says Mr. Mill,¹ "that there is hardly a single point of excellence belonging to human character which is not decidedly repugnant to the untutored feelings of human nature." The ambition to uproot fixed principles of action is apt to seem chimerical. The result of every honest effort to build a life on the foundation of love to God and man is likely to be a discouraging suspicion that the spirituality of Christ is too spiritual for human imitation. "The good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice," describes an experience which is familiar to every one who has striven to free himself from the power of evil motives; and it is liable to have disastrous consequences. Perfect manhood, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, is an ideal which may shine very brightly in one's moral firmament, and yet, like the fixed stars, be mainly suggestive of distance and inaccessibility. When a man regards absolute holiness as beyond his reach, as something to be admired sentimentally rather than achieved heroically, he cannot but lose confidence in the inerrancy of his moral sense. He will be likely to form the same opinion of any lower type of virtue which cannot be attained by any ordinary self-denial and determination. Consequently his moral ambition will wane as stimulus is thus repeatedly withdrawn from it, and will represent a constantly lowering standard of moral obligation. He will be overawed and debased by

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 46.

the very magnitude of the moral attainments he has been exhorted to acquire.

The remedy for this difficulty is identical with that which often makes men equal to seemingly impracticable secular undertakings, namely, *energy*. A determined and persistent purpose is an indispensable prerequisite to great worldly success. The obstacles which stand between any man and the goal of his ambition yield only to resolution and force of will. "Dash," "pluck," and "push" are words which are commonly employed to indicate the qualities by which men have won success in temporal pursuits. It would be but natural to infer that a like vigor of character must be displayed in accomplishing high spiritual ends. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Scriptures represent salvation as conditioned on the exercise of moral determination and force.

Christ has affirmed that a new epoch in the spiritual history of the human race began with the preaching of the kingdom of God. It is distinguished from that which preceded it by a peculiar tendency to develop spiritual enterprise and energy. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force," is his description of the conditions of spiritual success. The incisive command, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door," suggesting as it does in the original the activity of an athlete contending for a prize, gives the keynote of the new teachings, and the general

tenor of the New Testament is in harmony with that text. The traits of character which the Christian must cultivate are illustrated in the Gospels by the examples of an importunate borrower, a pertinacious plaintiff, a belligerent king. It is indicated in the parables that he must exercise in the pursuit of righteousness something analogous to business energy, that he must be morally a driving man, so to speak.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls, and selling everything he owns in order to buy one of great value. It is like a treasure which the finder is so bent on having that he raises money enough to purchase the whole field where it lies hidden. It is like a rock which a builder was so determined to reach that he digged in the earth for it and went deep. It is like talents which were doubled by vigorous management, like a pound with which a man traded so actively as to gain ten pounds. And in the Epistles the Christian is exhorted to display the same intensity of purpose and action. He must lay aside every weight in order to run a race in the presence of a great cloud of witnesses. He must clothe himself in complete armor in order to engage in combat with the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The gospel lays emphasis on the fact that holiness is a legitimate goal of human ambition, and that it can be attained only by the exercise of the same enterprising qualities which are needful for

success in secular pursuits. Human industry in almost all its forms is noisy, energetic, almost fierce. Looms clash, anvils ring, machinery rumbles. The steam-hammer falls on the glowing shaft with a blow that jars the earth. The locomotive shrieks and thunders in the hush of midnight. Rocks are rent by gunpowder with an explosion that hurls boulders into the clouds. The kingdom of wealth suffereth violence, and the efforts which are made to take it by force have filled the earth with bustle and uproar. Now Christ would have men display the same vigorous qualities in winning spiritual success. He would have them ambitious to build up pure lives as well as to rear imposing warehouses. He would have them zealous in weaving divine characters as well as in making fabrics of cotton or silk. If it is worth while to pulverize quartz for the sake of gold, it is no less so to crush temptation for the sake of righteousness. If it is profitable to generate steam in order to lift coal out of underground galleries, it cannot be less so to develop a spiritual force which will raise the soul to the level of a divine ideal. If it is enterprising to embark a fortune in a commercial venture in the hope of ultimate returns, it is vastly more so to consecrate a life to a supreme ethical ambition in the hope of winning a grander being and a larger usefulness in time and in eternity. These facts illustrate the spirit which Christ would introduce into the moral life of the world.

Now when that progressive, energetic disposition

which has just been described is manifested in secular undertakings, its mainspring, the source from which it derives its force, is *faith*. To believe that a thing can be done is the first and most important step in the process of doing it. The confidence which a sagacious man reposes in his ability to succeed in a difficult undertaking is proof of a peculiar force of will, which it also helps afterwards to sustain. It is not, however, knowledge, or a conviction wrought by overpowering evidence. It is rather an exhibition of the mind's creative power, of its innate ability to transform in effect a hope into a certainty, or, in other words, to act as if what is desirable were known to be attainable.

Conduct which is grounded in knowledge or in an involuntary belief does not adequately reflect the inherent vigor of the human mind. It is only when the will not merely originates acts, but also, in a certain practical sense, chooses the opinions from which they flow, that the peculiar force which human nature is capable of exerting receives a fitting illustration. That indomitable resolution by which a man believes that a certain end is within reach chiefly because he desires to reach it, and then devotes years or a lifetime to the work of verifying by toil and self-denial the conviction thus obtained, evinces, in some degree, the heroism which exists potentially in the human soul.

The emigrant who braves the dangers and hardships of a remote wilderness in the expectation of

bettering his fortunes and the statesman who risks reputation and popularity in the attempt to carry out a new political policy, the miner who has exiled himself from home in the precarious search for mineral treasures and the speculator who spends all he has in order to get control of a particular stock, the shipowner who exposes his fleet to the storms and perils of every sea and the military commander who hazards a decisive engagement on the strength of information which may turn out to be false, all derive their courage and resolution from their faith, which is itself a result, in part at least, of a bold choice. They run the risk of failure and loss because they believe that they will succeed ; and this conviction they cherish, not because they know it to be true, but because, although they are aware that it may be false, they choose to assume that it is not so. The confidence, self-reliance, and enterprise which enable a man to make his mark in politics or trade are largely a manifestation of his power to create his own beliefs, or in other words to decide for himself, in cases of doubt, in what proposed course of action he will put his trust. And the tenacity of purpose and superiority to discouragement which he afterwards displays are due, in great measure, to the stimulating force of the conviction which he has thus voluntarily acquired.

In making faith, therefore, a condition of spiritual success, the gospel seeks to evoke for moral ends the latent energy of human nature. The belief which the Scriptures enjoin is a free choice.

As explained in the first chapter, it is not an act which is rendered logically necessary by complete religious evidence. Christianity is not proved at the outset in the sense that doubt has become irrational. It is possible for even a candid man to withhold belief from it indefinitely, if he investigates it simply by weighing against each other the arguments on both sides of the question, while he neglects to avail himself of the broad induction which can be derived from personal experience. No man can have the faith which Christ enjoins who will adopt no theological opinions until they have been demonstrated beyond all possibility of error to be sound.

A person becomes a Christian through the agency of a volition. He is attracted by the beauty of holiness, and in order to acquire it he resolves to put his trust in certain religious teachings which he cannot as yet prove to be true. Or, what is almost the same thing, he is repelled by the ugliness of sin, and determines to credit a religion which claims to have the power to rid him of it. He adopts as his ideal of righteousness the perfect virtue which is exemplified in Christ, and chooses to regard it as attainable. He then sets to work to acquire it. In other words, he exercises for an unselfish object the same mental vigor which is displayed by all successful men in their secular enterprises. He who would enter the kingdom of heaven must have, to some extent, that force of will which enables one to act with decision in spite of

uncertainty and doubt. He must possess that resolute bent of mind which will make it possible for him to choose the beliefs on which he purposes to act even when his understanding can only halt between two opinions. He must be able, like the father of the demoniac child, to lift himself by the summary exercise of his voluntary power above mere intellectual difficulties, and with the words, "I believe," adopt a principle of action even while his cautious reason may be able only to utter the prayer, "Help thou mine unbelief." The only difference there is between the faith which all men exercise in the pursuit of temporal ends and the faith which saves the soul is in the objects for which they are cherished. A belief in the possibility of obtaining what seems a desirable end is called enterprise when it is indulged for the sake of earthly prizes, and saving faith when it is exhibited in the pursuit of righteousness. Faith in Christ is sluggish human nature rousing itself to meet the exigencies of its moral condition. It is selfish humanity putting forth its latent strength to recover the lost image of God. It justifies simply, as the etymology of the word suggests, because it makes just, because it expresses and fosters an energy of purpose which will make its way through the temptations and discouragements with which the path of holiness is beset.

Hence, Christ rewarded faith even when it was devoid of ethical quality, when it was exercised for personal advantage only, and his reason for so

doing may be gathered from the facts above presented. He thus gave a public, practical, and emphatic indorsement to a power of the human mind which would need, in order to become spiritually useful, only to be applied to the pursuit of holiness. The woman of Canaan, the blind man by the wayside, the nobleman whose son was healed at Capernaum, exercised their great faith to obtain their own private ends. The despondent father whose voluntary belief was recompensed in spite of his intellectual unbelief gave no evidence of having been converted to Christianity. Faith saves spiritually only when exercised for spiritual purposes, and in none of the cases just referred to did it possess apparently any quality different from or morally superior to the resolute confidence with which an invalid adopts a novel course of medical treatment, or which a parent displays when, at a great pecuniary sacrifice, he sends an ailing child to some mineral spring or to a more invigorating climate.

Therefore, although Jesus uniformly required belief in his power to heal before exerting it, he did not necessarily improve men morally by so doing. One might have faith enough to recover his eyesight and yet not become a Christian. Often lepers cleansed at one time, nine had enough to regain their health without, apparently, being brought any nearer to God. The marvelous cures wrought by Christ were not a primary or permanent feature of his mission, but seem rather to have been intended for sensible illustrations of the

conditions on which its benefits might be received. By healing the sick in recognition of their faith he called attention to the dormant power there is in human nature to overcome the depressing influence of doubt, and at the same time exemplified its efficacy. Almost every cure wrought by him emphasized the fact that men may, if they will, put forth energy enough to believe that what they desire to have they can obtain ; and he would merely have them use this latent power of will in surmounting all discouragements which might hinder them from embarking in pursuit of holiness.

Hence, in a community where unbelief was general and unconquerable he performed few mighty works, not, as I apprehend, because his power had there departed from him, but because he could not there illustrate by means of it the spiritual lesson which he was seeking to enforce. He could not furnish examples of the efficacy of faith where no faith existed. His miracles of healing taught most impressively the general truth that all things are possible to him that believeth ; but only they reaped the full benefit of their ability to believe who employed it to obtain the one thing needful, deliverance from the bondage of sin.

So, too, his miracles as a whole favor the surmise that they were mainly object-lessons, analogies which would facilitate the uplifting of human thought to spiritual facts. How readily his various cures lend themselves to this interpretation of their meaning is seen in the naturalness with which

spiritual infirmities find expression in language borrowed from physical ailments. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind I now see," was originally the utterance of one who had recovered his eyesight, but it has been appropriated to describe the experience of those who have come to recognize the truth which is in Christ. The deaf, the dumb, the lame, easily suggest religious parallels, and seem to have furnished them to the Hebrew prophets. Leprosy was a disease which symbolized sin to the Jewish mind as no other did; it was viewed with peculiar horror on that account; and it would have been impossible for Jesus to give a more forcible and vivid illustration of his power to save men from sin than he would furnish by curing this terrible malady. The raising of Lazarus he himself interprets as a token of his ability to quicken the morally dead, as is shown by his remark, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." When the blind man was brought to him on the road to Jericho, the question which Jesus put to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" would seem to have been a needless one unless it was designed to suggest to the man that the great Physician could cure other than physical blindness. So when the paralytic was lowered from the housetop, it was a moral cure which Jesus wrought first, as appears from his words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." And when his right to use those

words was virtually denied by some who were present he replied, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), . . . Arise, and take up thy bed and go unto thy house," — as if there was so close an analogy between the physical and the spiritual cure that the power to perform the one could be inferred from the power to work the other.

And so of every other wonderful work ascribed to him. It fits in so readily with a spiritual interpretation of it that in every, or almost every, case the miracle has supplied the language in which certain experiences of the church or of individual Christians are most naturally described. Who can fail to see that the remarkable draught of fishes that brought Peter to his knees was intended as a symbol of the successes which awaited him and others as fishers of men? How often has the stilling of the tempest been used to enforce the truth that Christianity is safe even when the Master seems oblivious of the perils which surround it! Can any one doubt that the chief significance of the feeding of the multitudes, especially when considered in connection with the discourse on the Bread of Life which is associated with it, is in the apt and much needed illustration it affords of the adequacy of even the small resources of Christ's followers to supply the religious needs of the world when these resources have been consecrated by the blessing of the Saviour? Could a

more impressive emphasis than is furnished by the narrative which describes his appearance on the sea to the disciples in their storm-tossed boat be given to the fact, which the church so gladly believes, that when it has become weary and helpless in the path of duty it may confidently expect his presence and aid? Nor will any one who has been sustained through a troubled and stormy life by his Christian faith have any difficulty in recognizing his experiences in those of Peter when he left his boat to walk upon the waves, or in understanding that the whole course of his religious development has been so ordered as to impress upon his mind the fact that even the fluctuations of trial and danger afford a safe footing to him who would draw near to Christ.

Those who imagine that the miracles were meant to be permanent features of the Christian religion, that they may be expected to recur even in our own time as a sequel to a sufficient degree of faith, and that it is only the weakness of human belief which keeps them from becoming incidents of daily or hourly occurrence, seem to have missed their real import. They were not designed to illustrate the power of a great faith, but that which inheres in the principle of faith, even in faith which is no larger than a grain of mustard-seed. They were not wrought to supersede the common laws of nature or to render men independent of the usual methods of gaining health and other desirable ends. They are essentially parables

narrated by signs instead of words. The parable, in the common acceptation of the term, is a story that illustrates a spiritual law or fact which might be apprehended without it; the miracle is an event which illustrates a spiritual law or fact that transcends human powers of observation. A man needs only to hear the story of the Prodigal Son in order to form some true idea of God's attitude towards the penitent sinner; but he needs to know that a multitude has been fed by Christ with a few loaves and fishes in order to believe that the blessing of God can render the simple truths of the gospel the ultimate food of all mankind. The miracle becomes an aid to religious faith by directing the attention, through a sublime analogy, to recondite but momentous facts in the invisible world. It fulfilled its mission when it was performed and went on record. The truth which it was designed to teach has thus been added permanently to the didactics of Christianity. A repetition of the sign itself, therefore, is needless and is not to be expected.

The teachings of the Old Testament as to the import of faith are in harmony with those of the New. The faith of Abraham was praised even when, as would appear, it was not exercised for a spiritual end. When he accepted the divine assurance that his seed would outnumber the stars in multitude, his faith had no obvious ethical quality. It seems to have been evoked by the influence of personal ambition, by the stimulating

prospect of becoming the founder of a mighty nation. Neither is it called, in the Book of Genesis, a righteous act. It is said merely to have been counted to him for righteousness. That is, apparently, there was a promise of righteousness in it because the force of will exhibited in it was competent, when employed in the right direction, to elevate and sanctify his character. He is to be understood, no doubt, as already actuated by a sincere desire for righteousness. This single act of faith, therefore, evinced on his part a contempt of difficulties, a superiority to discouragements, which was sure to show itself in his moral conduct and to make him in time an eminently holy man. And when we read that saying of Christ, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad," we may surmise that Jesus meant to teach that the same sanguine, energetic temperament which had made it possible for the father of the faithful to put his trust in a seemingly incredible promise enabled him to anticipate the mission of Jesus and to obtain from it the moral stimulus which won for him the proud title of "the friend of God."

If, however, it should be thought that some of the expressions used by Paul are inconsistent with this view and constrain us to adopt the common opinion that the faith of Abraham was a righteous act in itself and was reckoned to him as perfect righteousness, or a righteous character, this interpretation will still be in harmony with what has

been presented; for there would seem to be no reason why a single righteous act of belief should have been counted to any one for a faultless moral character unless it manifested a moral force which was competent to develop it into that for which it had been imputed.

Justification by faith, then, is not an arbitrary divine act. It is not one that is wrought without any obvious regard to the inherent fitness of things. It is not even one which, to any considerable degree, is shrouded in mystery. God justifies no one who is not certain to become just. He imputes no virtue which is not sure to be acquired. Belief is reckoned to one for righteousness simply because it will make one righteous. Faith in Christ saves the soul, first, because it does away with the debilitating fear which makes religious action selfish, and, secondly, because it evinces and helps to foster an energy which is destined in time to annihilate sin.

It is a failure to understand the inseparable connection between belief and conduct which has given rise to the misconception that there is a disagreement between Paul and James as to the fundamental conditions of salvation. The statement of the one, "A man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law," and that of the other, "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith," have been often charged with being irreconcilable with each other. They are no more so, however, than are the contrasted views

of Christianity which are found in the utterances of Christ and which have been given in an earlier chapter. They are no more self-contradictory than are the ethics and the doctrinal teachings of Paul himself. James's declarations of the futility of a barren faith fall far below those of the great apostle to the Gentiles in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, where he virtually asserts that a man is justified neither by faith nor by works, but by love.

In point of fact, both are right and equally so. The difference between them is mainly that one is putting emphasis on the first of the essentials of a Christian character, while the other lays stress on the second. Paul, analytical, profound, psychological, mentally abstracts faith from the works which are really inseparable from it, and asserts the undoubted fact that in it resides the force which makes the latter possible. James, practical, plain, familiar, fixes his attention on the ethical conduct in which faith results, and affirms that this, as the thing of obvious value, has a share in the process of making men righteous. Paul maintains that to the planted seed must be accorded the honor of producing the fruit rather than to the tree which but for the seed would not have existed. James declares that it is the tree that bears the fruit and not the seed only, which, unless it sprouts and makes a tree, is barren and dead. They are simply looking at the subject from different points of view. Both imply or admit that a perfect life is

perfect salvation. Neither would deny, and Paul strenuously contends, that such a life is impossible save as a gradual growth out of a germ of faith. When the latter condenses the whole of his religious philosophy into a single formula, the alleged disagreement vanishes. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love," is a view of justification which tallies exactly with that of James.

No new principle of action, then, is introduced into the world by this doctrine. On the contrary, the wild suggestions of spiritual quackery and an unreasoning mysticism are set aside by it. The unity of God receives a fresh illustration from it through the added evidence it gives that the conditions of success are uniform in all branches of human activity. If faith is needful for redemption from sin and death, it is none the less so for salvation from poverty and obscurity. If men need encouragement and support before they can believe in themselves and in the possibility of winning a fortune or a name, the promises of the gospel recognize the fact in its relation to eternal prizes, and reveal the truths which are calculated to inspire hope and confidence. The parable of the Unfaithful Steward sets forth its own moral in the text, "The sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light." In other words, men will display when they are seeking a selfish advantage a shrewdness, an enter-

prise, a wisdom in suiting means to ends which they seem to regard as unnecessary when only spiritual gains are to be had. The doctrine of Justification by Faith simply translates the conditions of temporal success into the language of spiritual achievement. The sons of the light must be as wise for their own generation as the sons of this world if they are to reap in eternity the success which the others so often win in time.

Human society has found it advisable to embody the principle of this doctrine in its statutes. The supersession of imprisonment for debt by bankrupt laws, which relieve the debtor of all discouragement on account of debts which he cannot pay and permit him to begin business anew, is akin to one feature of justification by faith. "The remission of sins that are past" is indispensable if men are to try to abstain from sin in the future. There must be no old accounts of which an impossible settlement is likely to be demanded by and by, no pitiless arm reaching up out of the abyss of time to pluck down an aspiring soul from the very pinnacles of hope. In real life Jean Valjean will never become a saint while Javert is dogging his heels. No; heaven also must have its bankrupt laws if remorse is to eventuate in a new life. The threats which are ordinarily inseparable from sin must be deprived of their terror if it is to become psychologically possible for one who feels that he has incurred them to achieve a divine character.

And the incentives to action which society brings to bear upon the man it is seeking to reform are in line with those which the gospel suggests to all whom it is trying to justify. To impress upon a fallen man a conception of the essential dignity of manhood, to persuade him that he is an object of friendly interest to those who are far above him in personal character and social station, to assure him that future failures will not exhaust the patience of his benefactors, to promise him constant sympathy and help, to give him hope that he will achieve success in the end, is likely, if anything is, to arouse his dormant moral energy and make him equal to the work for which he has girded himself. All of these motives the philanthropist presents to the outcast whom he is seeking to save, and all of them are brought to bear on him whom Christ is justifying. The declarations that he is a son of a heavenly Father, that there is joy over his conversion among the angels of heaven, that the way is always open for the returning prodigal, that there is an ever present Spirit who will help his infirmities, and that in due season he will reap if he faints not, are cognate with those enumerated above. They help to keep faith alive in spite of failures, and so to bring the life gradually up to its ideals.

CHAPTER XIII

LOVE AND SERVICE

THE love which Christianity inculcates and in which is found its reason for being is not only disinterested, but it is also comprehensive and universal. It seeks to bless wherever it can find anything to bless. Its nature is to promote as far as possible the happiness of all sentient beings, to manifest itself in beneficent action towards all living objects. The ways in which it will express itself will differ according to the needs and character of that which calls it forth, and its intensity will normally be proportioned to the value of that which is loved, but nevertheless in the last analysis it is a single principle. It is a disposition to render affectionate service to all forms of life according to their capacity to receive it. Whether it is cherished towards a worm, a man, or God, it is intrinsically the same thing. Its names and offices will be as various as are the classes of objects by which it is evoked. It will be called piety when exercised towards the Deity and humanity when displayed towards the lower animals. When directed towards human beings, it will be known by as many different appellations as there are dis-

tinct relations in which it shows itself. It will be denominated, according to circumstances, justice, morality, virtue, righteousness, holiness. But these names indicate only so many different ways in which it finds appropriate expression. Justice is love giving to others their rights; morality is love discharging, in the matter of private conduct, its obligations to society; holiness is love imitating the divine character. All of these names are often given to conduct and qualities which have no love in them, but they denote Christian virtues only when they designate respectively some phase of an absolute benevolence, of an active good-will felt towards every sentient being.

On whatever plane this love may first show itself, it is sure to extend to every other which may be brought to its knowledge. Whoever loves man in the Christian sense will love God also, and true piety necessarily involves the principle of philanthropy. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen," says John. In other words, love can make no exceptions. It cannot discriminate among its objects to the prejudice of any. It is an indivisible principle of action, and needs not even to see that on which it is lavished. It may be manifested towards an invisible being. But if it is not elicited by that which is seen, there is no genuineness in it when it is supposed to be exercised towards that which is not seen. It would be entirely pertinent to demand, If a man love not his

brother whom he hath not seen, how can he love his brother whom he hath seen? In the Christian sense he cannot. Fraternal love, according to the gospel, is not an emotion which depends on the influence of certain visible attractions; it is a mental attitude which is assumed towards anything visible or invisible, near or remote, which is entitled to the name of brother. Paul only displayed his customary psychological precision when he said, "He that loveth another [Gr. "the other;" Rev. Vers. "his neighbor"] hath fulfilled the law." There was more in the text of the law than the mere command to love one's neighbor; but a real obedience to that presupposes a moral condition to which any violation of the law whatever would be foreign. No man is really honest, even though he scrupulously pays a certain class of his debts, if, with the ability to pay them all, he refuses to do so. If he is really honest in paying a single creditor, that fact guarantees the payment of every other as soon as he has the means. It is proof of a disposition, of one which cannot defraud any man without being at discord with itself. So love is not genuine, in the Christian meaning of the word, if it evinces a needless partiality. They in whom it exists as a principle may be frequently seduced by temptation into action which is opposed to it. It will be slow in gaining full control of the conduct. But these inconsistencies will be recognized as such by him who has committed them and will not be justified by him. Love as a purpose must be true

to itself. If it is genuine in a single instance it will manifest itself as a universal principle.

When a certain lawyer put to Jesus the question, "And who is my neighbor?" the answer which he received laid bare the very foundation of practical Christian ethics; for it was then that the parable of the Good Samaritan was related. The scribe himself had just shown that he was thoroughly conversant with the supreme law of duty, and with the fact that it was grounded in love; for, in answer to a question of the Master, he had summed it up in the single sentence, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself," and the reply of Jesus was, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." There was no fault to be found with the moral theories of the man. But it would seem as if he himself suspected that whatever flaws there might be in his practice would be due to some misinterpretation of the word "neighbor." He had not been wont to give to it a very wide meaning. The neighbors of a Jew were only members of his own race. But there was a new spirit in the land. The old bottles had begun to swell. The universalism of Jesus was already producing its effects; and among them, perhaps, we are to reckon the lawyer's second question, "And who is my neighbor?"

The definition which it evoked must have startled and bewildered the questioner. The great

Teacher did not choose for a living illustration of neighborly kindness one of Jehovah's own people. He did not single out for his purpose some ecclesiastical dignitary whose religious surroundings might be supposed to have imparted to him a peculiar sanctity. He selected a member of a despised and hated race, with which the Jews habitually refused to have any dealings, and in which no Israelite at that time except Jesus would have thought of looking for the hero of a moral tale. Yet he attributed to so unpromising a character a course of conduct which a prejudiced Jewish scribe was obliged to confess exhibited the true neighborly spirit, although by so doing he necessarily commended a despised Samaritan at the expense of certain religious representatives of his own nation. And Christ's closing admonition, "Go, and do thou likewise," removed the story from the realm of mere theory and sentiment and made it a rule of practical conduct.

The love which Jesus inculcated by this touching and impressive narrative is simply the love of man as man. Racial distinctions he ignores. National feuds cannot cancel the bond of humanity. The Samaritan was neighbor to the Jew; the Jew ought to be neighbor to the Samaritan. The Gentile was less an object of loathing to the chosen people than the mongrel race whose territory separated their two principal provinces, and so by irresistible inference the neighborly tie should be established between the seed of Abraham and the

pagan outcasts. The parable isolated the principle of love from all immaterial circumstances, exhibited it unalloyed with any personal, family, or patriotic preferences, framed it, as it were, against a background out of which no confusing suspicions of selfish motives could find their way into it to obscure the distinctness of its outlines. The moral of the parable is that we owe neighborly duties to any fellow being whom we can help, no matter what may be his race or what may be our present feelings towards him. Philanthropy is lifted above such extraneous motives as the natural attractiveness that may inhere in its objects or as even the welfare of the nation by whose citizens it is exercised. Such considerations are not often, if they are ever, wholly disinterested. They may not merit ethically the highest praise. Christian love sees in every human being, even the lowest and most repulsive, a brother. Its nearest neighbors are those who most need its help, wherever they are to be found. In distributing its benefactions it makes no account of the barriers of country, language, or race. Its motto was partly anticipated in the famous sentiment of the pagan dramatist, "Nothing that pertains to man do I regard as no concern of mine." By the very necessity of its nature, it reaches up to God and pays its dues to him, while striving to bless at the same time any one within the scope of its influence who bears the name of man.

It was to be expected that a religion with such a conception of love, with such an idea of the unity

of the human race, would give to its evangelists a broad commission; that its command to them would be, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." In doing so it was but carrying out the teachings of the parable we have been considering. It was pushing its avowed ethical principles to their practical logical outcome. The definition of love with which it had familiarized its disciples would not permit it to neglect any of the sons of men. Beginning from Jerusalem, they must preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ unto all the nations. Commencing at the spot where it first came in contact with humanity, the gospel must spread until it had given of its best to the ignorant and the degraded in every part of the globe.

There can be no essential distinction between different kinds of missionary work. Foreign, home, and local missions are but so many different channels into which the indivisible spirit of Christian love finds its way, and if the kind of love which Jesus enjoined is exhibited in any one of them, it is impossible that those who are interested in that one should not be interested in the others also. A lack of ability may sometimes prevent a Christian from giving a practical expression of his love for his fellow men in distant parts of the earth, but he will not be without it, nevertheless. If he says, I believe in christianizing my own country but have no desire to do similar work for outside people, he simply confesses that he has not yet come into full

sympathy with the philanthropy of the gospel. His conception of love is only tribal. It is on a level with that which would define a neighbor as a fellow countryman. It is far below the moral standard of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

When a surveyor purposes to flood a field so as to cover every irregularity in its surface, he will adjust his leveling instrument so as to clear the top of the highest hummock. The spider-lines in his glass will be projected in the form of a cross against a hillside miles away perhaps. It will make no difference whether he directs that the surface of the pond be raised as high as that point, or that it be elevated until it hides the hummock; the result will be the same in both cases. Water maintains its level. If it covers the top of the mound, it will reach the spot on the hillside which the crossed lines had indicated. Or if it rises as high as that, it will submerge the mound. Whichever order is carried out the field will be flooded. So Christian love cannot but seek its level. If it is genuine when it blesses those who are nearest, it has risen high enough to plant its crosses on the most distant shores. If it is deep enough to make sacrifices for the spiritually needy in foreign lands, it cannot neglect those at home. In no individual case will it be able to reach more than a few of those in far-off climes who need its help; but it is not a lack of love which keeps it from furthering the welfare of all. Its operations may be narrowed by poverty or by the impossibility of reaching some

shores ; but when these barriers give way the tide of benevolence follows its law and flows into every accessible nook and corner of the earth.

It is a sign of spiritual retrogression, therefore, when a church or an individual determines to cut off its contributions to foreign work for no other reason than that there are heathen enough at home. Doubtless there are ; but the way to reach them is not to lower the quality of love any more than the way to deepen the water on the nearest shore of a lake is to make it shallower on the opposite side. The first of all requisites for missionary success, whether at home or abroad, is a true missionary spirit. An indispensable condition of the largest evangelical power is a humanitarianism which is independent of all motives save the love of man as man. The surest way to create the deepest interest in home missions is to develop an interest in foreign work, for this is no more than saying that the best method of getting the amplest results of love is to make sure that love is of the best quality. When it is equal to the task of making sacrifices for those who are too remote geographically and too unattractive in all respects to excite any interest in them on the part of others save what arises from the fact that they are members of the human family, it has successfully endured the most decisive test of genuineness to which love can be subjected. The affection which a mother feels for her children is not always in all respects commendable, for it often leads her to gratify their transient

whims at the expense of their truest interests. The benevolence which a man practices in his own neighborhood is not necessarily of a very high type, for pride in the good name of his town may be at the bottom of it. The sacrifices which the patriot makes for his country may be prompted by the fact that every increase of its glory adds to his own sense of personal exaltation. None of these cases afford an indubitable expression of Christian love. So, too, when some widespread disaster, which has plunged thousands of persons into misery, so works on public sympathy that men who have not been wont to give now for a time give generously, we have no example of the truest beneficence in these exceptional acts of charity even though some of them be of the largest. Philanthropy, according to the Christian conception of it, is independent of emotional excitement as well as of considerations pertaining to locality. It does its work steadily and persistently, blessing men wherever it can find them, without the stimulus of thanks, in spite of the discouragement of ingratitude, needing the spur of no abnormal and passing outburst of feeling. It finds its truest illustration, therefore, in the foreign missionary service; and when it has been tested by the requirements of this and not found wanting, a stamp of genuineness has been impressed upon it which is a guarantee against disappointment when it shall be called upon to meet the needs of the home work.

When the foliage of spring does not extend to

the ends of the branches, the tree is dying at the top. The fact may be hidden for a while by pruning off the dead wood, but the health of the tree cannot be so restored. The church which lops off the cause of foreign missions from its list of benevolences may imagine that it has promoted by so doing the vigor of those which it retains, but it has merely tried to put out of sight the evidences of a moribund condition. The lack of spiritual vitality which it has thus betrayed will lead in due time to the amputation of charities nearer home. Let the religious organizations of any city undertake to economize their gifts in this way, lured by the specious hope of being able thus to supply more easily the needs of their own community, and they will find the area of their active sympathy narrowing until it will be hard at last for them to sustain their own local benevolences. A distinguished senator said some years ago that fourteen Congregational churches in a single county of Massachusetts gave more for benevolent objects by thousands of dollars than his whole denomination throughout the country. But though none of the poorest, it had almost no foreign missions. It was not surprising, therefore, that he was obliged to admit that it had much difficulty in supporting a single missionary in Utah. Of course. Love, like water, preserves its level. If it is drawn down till it leaves bare the opposite shore, shoals will appear close at hand. If the sap does not circulate vigorously enough to keep green the

remote twigs, decay will soon show itself nearer the trunk. And the reason has already been indicated. It lies in the fact that the only perennial, even, and inexhaustible source of charity is love for man as man rather than as a countryman or a fellow townsman. Such a love will extend its beneficence everywhere, and will be relatively free from the fluctuations of interest and the emotional ebbs that are inseparable from an affection of a narrower scope which is dependent for its continuance on visible results and tidal waves of feeling.

How, then, is this universal love to be obtained? Only by loving universally. To broaden affection it may be necessary at first to force it into channels into which it does not flow easily, especially into those that are far distant and unfamiliar. It is a mental law that our interest grows in that which we interest ourselves in. Deeds wrought at first from a cold sense of duty are repeated with an ever increasing glow of sympathy. Sacrifices made for the stranger in the antipodes beget a warm affection for him.

“Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with another;
And through all the years of famine
It will serve thee and thy brother.”

These lines are psychologically true. It is undeniable that “the heart grows rich in giving.” The will may at first only draw a line in the soul that marks the course for charity to pursue, but repeated acts of generosity will deepen it into a groove along

which the heart will send in time a vital current. Principle may labor dispassionately in the valley of weeping to make it a well, but the rain of a kindly human affection will ultimately fill the pools. A simple command of Christ, or a mere definition of Christian love which is followed by a larger intellectual appreciation of its limitless scope, may serve as an index-finger to turn some portion of the Christian's practical energy into the foreign field, but the expansion of soul which is sure to follow will make him conscious of the fraternal tie which constitutes him the keeper of even the least lovely of his brethren.

When the extremities are benumbed by the cold of a frosty morning, a man will often beat himself violently with both hands and stamp heavily on the ground for a minute or more. In this way he not only stimulates the ducts in the parts immediately affected, but he stirs up the centre and source of circulation as well. He sets the heart to beating more quickly, the lungs to purifying the blood more rapidly, the vital currents to forcing their way more powerfully into chilled fingers and toes. So an active participation in the foreign work produces an analogous twofold effect. It chafes the extremities, as it were, and at the same time quickens the pulses. It opens the way for the operations of a world-wide philanthropy, and by so doing creates the spiritual force which will propel the sympathies into the new lines of effort.

We see, therefore, in almost the last recorded utterance of Jesus, "And ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," the fairest fruit of his teachings and the surest test of the fertility of the church. They do not indicate any subordinate Christian duty. They do not contain a mere afterthought which has no vital relation to the main body of gospel truth. Nor do they contemplate the spiritual advantage of those only to whom the glad tidings are to be proclaimed. They have quite as much reference to the needs of those to whom the message is intrusted. Obedience to it is an essential feature of Christian discipline, an indispensable factor of individual spiritual development. There can be no largeness of human nature without the cultivation of broad and far-reaching human sympathies. The gospel, like mercy, "blesseth him that gives and him that takes," but the former is sure of a personal growth which the other may not attain.

Missionary service, therefore, is always successful. It may not at first make many converts, but that is merely a temporary failure of only one of its sources of influence. The lives that have been consecrated to it, the money that has been spent in it, the prayers that have been offered up in its behalf, the sympathy of thousands that has attended it, the deepening of interest in the ignorant and unfortunate that has resulted from it, the wider sense of human brotherhood that has been

promoted in all who have helped to carry it on, represent permanent gains to humanity which no coldness of reception that the message may encounter at the outset among those to whom it is sent can neutralize. They have augmented the average ethical value of the Christian Church; they have improved the quality of love in thousands of Christian hearts; they have deepened the reservoirs of spiritual force; and consequently there is a larger capacity in the human race for self-denial and philanthropic self-sacrifice.

It doubtless seems strange to many who appreciate the importance of the foreign work, and are troubled at the same time by the slowness with which the funds are provided to carry it on, that God does not open up some other source of revenue which will render the work independent of human poverty and parsimony. With that text ringing in their ears, —

“For every beast of the forest is mine,
And the cattle upon a thousand hills,” —

it is but natural that their first thought should be a wish that the Almighty would turn some of his boundless wealth into the work of evangelizing the world, and so relieve the church from the incessant calls that are made upon it for contributions. But if he should do so, he would sacrifice one of the objects which missionary service as now conducted promotes. He would secure expansion at the cost of depth. He would increase the numbers of the Christian fraternity while neg-

lecting to develop the spirit of brotherhood. He would defeat the crowning purpose of the gospel, which is to develop a neighborly kindness in human souls, an active beneficence which will bind each to each by the reciprocal influence of services rendered and received. Love has climbed upward through the ages in ever-widening spirals from self to the family, the tribe, the nation. At every ascent it has dropped some crude narrowness out of itself. Like the souls of the Buddhistic evolution, it has gained in purity by each transmigration. But it must crown the process by lifting itself up to the love of man as man, for it is only then that it will have grown into love for God as God. It is only then that it will have been freed from all impurities and distilled into a divine clearness. And there is no way for it to mount to such celestial heights save by broadening the scope of its work until it is ready to interest itself in and make sacrifices for those who are far off as well as for those who are near.

No doubt there were various reasons of an administrative nature for the world-wide mission which Jesus committed to his followers. One of them is found in the fact that a religion will spread the faster the more numerous and widely diffused are the centres from which it is propagated. It would be a work of hopeless slowness for Christians to undertake to evangelize the world by concentrating their missionary efforts on their own country and trusting that the frontiers of their

religious influence will gradually widen until they shall embrace all the earth. The farmer who burns over his fields will kindle fires in numerous spots to hasten the process. The persecution which scattered the church at Jerusalem was a benefit to Christianity, for it flung the blazing brands of truth in all directions, each one of which was to start more than one independent nucleus of missionary influence which would begin at once to enlarge itself. The principal work of the church in the foreign field in the last century was to plant its torches in as many localities as possible. The wisdom and value of the policy will be made more fully manifest later when an ever increasing volume of light shall be poured into the darkness of the world from thousands of permanent and firmly established centres of religious illumination.

Jesus may also have had in mind, when he sent his disciples to all the nations, the imperative need there is of anticipating the evil influence which the stronger races exert upon those that are weak. When Pastor Robinson heard of the first bloody collision between the Pilgrims and the Indians, and wrote back, "Would that you had converted some before you had killed any," he indicated a difficulty with which the foreign missionary is everywhere confronted. The darker side of civilization reaches the field first. Commerce and war too often plant the tares before the wheat is sown. Christianity becomes a symbol of oppression and vice before it can associate itself in the minds of

an ignorant people with the spirit of love and mercy. It must encounter suspicion and hostility, therefore, before it can beget confidence and receive a welcome. If evil is not to preëempt large sections of the globe, good must enter them with or before it and compete with it there for mastery. If wickedness is not to intrench itself in strongholds all over the earth from which all reformative influences will recoil in hopeless impotence, there must be foreign missionaries whose field is the world, and who will be at their posts early enough to prune the green tree instead of the dry.

It may well be that the Master had in mind both of these reasons when he left with his church the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." But deeper than either of them, outranking them both in intrinsic importance, is the one which was first considered, the psychological fact that nothing less than universal service, nothing less than a sense of obligation to man as man, nothing less than a love of humanity which is proof against the drawbacks of distance and national prejudice, is competent to develop the character which is distinctively Christian, and that this broadness of sympathy and human affection can only be had through the medium of persistent efforts to promote the welfare of the whole human race.

The church is right, therefore, in exalting the meetings of its foreign missionary societies to the foremost place among its religious gatherings.

The secular press is right when it accords large space in its columns to these annual convocations. The general public is right when, in spite of well-meaning criticisms and some empty sneers, it regards them with peculiar interest and attention. They represent not only the high-water mark of modern civilization, but also all that is most peculiar in the practical ethics of Christianity. They exhibit the Christian conception of universal brotherhood in actual and successful operation. They demonstrate, and set in so clear a light that he who runs may read, the fact that the church of Christ does not hold this conception as an idle sentiment, but is furnishing men and women by the hundred, and dollars by the million, to aid their fellow creatures in all parts of the earth, many of whom are so far below the standard of civilized humanity that it is hard sometimes even to call them men.

It may be well for a denomination to point with satisfaction to the historians, the poets, the statesmen, who have held its tenets. The growth of the intellect is needed in order to round out the ideal manhood which we desire to see evolved. If the mental development of such men is due in any way to their religious beliefs, the creeds, positive or negative, which have evoked their genius or promoted their scholarship are not to be regarded as barren or unfruitful. But we should not permit the glare of intellectual achievement to blind us to the fact that love is better than learning, that human nature is more honored by philanthropy

than by literary success. We should not lose sight of the fact that Christianity means not primarily the embellishment of the mind with intellectual graces, but its enlargement by the cultivation of human sympathies. As Jesus saw in the widow's mite a richer gift than was given by many who gave much, so he would descry, no doubt, more that is praiseworthy in the humble talents that are consecrated on God's altar to the service of some benighted pagan tribe than in the most scholarly tome or the most brilliant poem which has no higher aim than to add to the information or the pleasure of an educated people.

There was little of culture in the men who left their nets to follow Jesus. Even Paul labored at a disadvantage when the polished Greeks began to criticise his oratory. But he and his fellow apostles exemplified something better than secular learning, something of more value than intellectual refinement. They were almost the sole living representatives of the highest ethical possibilities of human nature. They were at the head of a small group of devoted men who were imparting reality to the conception of unselfish love by exhibiting it in practical operation. And their successors in our own time, who are willing to sunder ties of country and home for the purpose of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to those who have no claim upon them save what is created by the fact that both helpers and helped share a common humanity, are keeping before the eyes of men

that spiritual plane which raises those who live on it, even when they are but little, far above the greatest and wisest of those whose highest motives pertain to a lower ethical level. They are not only giving proofs in their own persons that the atmosphere of self-abnegation in which Jesus lived and did his work is one that can be breathed by human beings of a lower spiritual order, but they furnish a stepping-stone by which multitudes who cannot follow them personally to foreign lands may, through the medium of a practical and self-sacrificing sympathy with them, mount into a like humanitarian broadness.

The world and even considerable sections of the Christian Church have yet to learn that the spirit of the kingdom of heaven is an absolute love such as has thus been described; that the very essence of Christianity is an interest in men which is neither chilled by any repulsiveness in them nor dependent on any attractiveness they may possess, — such a sympathy with needy humanity as Jesus exemplified so touchingly and eloquently when, in spite of the prejudices of his time and the inherent disagreeableness of the act, he laid the hand of a brother on the person of a loathsome leper. It was a gesture pregnant with meaning, and illustrated the conditions of evangelistic success as did no other act performed by him, not excepting that of washing the disciples' feet. It emphasized and illumined the fact that no natural feelings of disinclination or repugnance ought to be allowed to

stand in the way of him who is able to help a fellow mortal. It is by the performance of what might seem at first unpleasant missionary duties that the Christian Church lays its fraternal hand on humanity as a whole.

It is the belief of orthodoxy that the work of Christ himself was the grandest exhibition of foreign missionary zeal which the history of the universe has afforded. Every Christian worker who turns his back on the allurements and promises of secular pursuits is but repeating on a small scale the sacrifice which is described in the apostle's words, "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." The hostility and resistance which Christian teachers are encountering to-day in China and elsewhere have their parallel in the experiences of Jesus as set forth in the texts, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," and "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son." And that passage in Philippians, "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross," recording as it does a swift series of sacrifices for the good of man, seems to make audible to us the footfalls of divine love as it descends one after another the successive steps in the stairway of a sublime self-humiliation. It

is the belief of orthodoxy that the duty of imitating Christ involves that of climbing down the relatively short ladder by which the more civilized races can reach the level of those which are least enlightened, and of so exemplifying a self-sacrificing love which is willing to help even the lowest into the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

It may be superfluous for me to state that I do not imply that there is necessarily any truer love shown by the foreign missionary than by him who labors in the home field. I have had little success in making myself understood, if I have not conveyed the idea that if both are really serving Christ they have precisely the same spirit. Whether a man or a woman will work in some lawless western town, or among the savages in some far distant island, or in the slums of the city in which either was born, will be determined by circumstances which will probably justify the choice that will be made. No branch of missionary work ought to be neglected, and special considerations will lead some to choose one and some another. If there are those who regard themselves as best fitted for home work, it is for that reason and not from any narrowness of sympathy that they do not enter the foreign service. If there are those whose experiences have given them a peculiar interest in the religious needs of their own town, they do not devote their lives to supplying these because they have not enough of the spirit of Christ in them to labor on the other side of the globe. On the con-

trary, it is because a man has that broad love for humanity which reveals to him a brother in the most degraded savage in the most distant parts of the earth that he is able to consecrate himself so earnestly to the work he is doing for his Master in his own country or neighborhood. The one way to generate a spiritual force that will be equal to the demands of the home field is to create an active interest in the work abroad. Every foreign missionary sermon is a home missionary sermon. It is calculated to arouse a feeling of which the home work will also reap the benefit.

In a town which gets its water from a pond there may be houses so high that when the pond is low no water will flow from the faucets in the upper rooms. In that case the pressure will be less everywhere, and if a fire breaks out, the jets from the hydrants may fail to reach a burning roof. What is needed is a rain that will fill the pond to the brim and cause the water to rush with violence from the stop-cocks in the highest attics. Then the streams from the street mains will be powerful enough to wet the tops of the loftiest buildings, and a new force will be added to the jets that are lower down. So what is needed to give new impetus to local benevolence and home missionary work is such a deepening of the spirit of fraternal love in the hearts of a Christian people as will send the water of life with vigor into the most distant parts of the earth. The energy thus evolved will make itself felt in every department of charitable work.

A brief summary of the positions I have sought to establish in these chapters may serve to make clearer the general trend of thought.

1. Any man may rationally assume to be true — especially if he purposes to verify his assumption by appropriate action — any not improbable teachings which are not as yet susceptible of scientific demonstration, as is shown conclusively by the fact that in no other way can most of the practical knowledge which is needed by men be obtained, or even a prolonged course of scientific investigation be carried on. Therefore, the body of facts connoted by orthodox Christianity, if they cannot be shown to transcend the bounds of probability, may be properly accepted as true until they shall have been proved false by the test of a subsequent experience, or in some other way.

2. Consequently, it may be fairly assumed — at least provisionally — that the earth is under the active dominion of a creative and superintending Mind, of a Being who is developing mankind into a likeness to himself ; for not only is such an assumption not improbable in itself, but it is even rendered in a certain degree probable by the fact that it is a corollary of the theory of evolution, a theory which is deemed in the highest degree probable by a large majority of competent scholars.

3. It may be rationally taken for granted, also, — at least as a working hypothesis, — that this Being possesses a moral character whose crowning trait is unselfish love ; for so much would be in-

ferred from the fact that the race which it is supposed is being developed into his likeness is coming more and more to recognize such a love as its supreme ethical ideal, while such facts as evil and pain, the only ones which are alleged to be incompatible with such a love, may really contravene only an incorrect conception of omnipotence.

4. The two assumptions thus named — whatever may be their original credibility — can be experimentally demonstrated by any one to his own satisfaction to be sound by an inductive process which differs in no particular worthy of mention from that by which many another fact is considered to have been scientifically established, and which requires on the part of him who performs it almost nothing more than a broadening of his field of scientific research and a loyalty to the ethical standards which are recognized by evolution and by the best moral philosophy of the time.

5. As it may thus be shown to be at least probable that there is a Supreme Being with such a character as has already been described, this fact removes, according to the admissions of competent authorities, any antecedent improbability there might otherwise have been that the sphere of natural law with which we are familiar would ever be transcended by phenomena which we call miracles, and justifies us in believing that this has been done, if it can be shown that there was a pressing need of its being done, and that there is a reasonable amount of evidence that a miracle has been

wrought. That such a need existed is made sufficiently obvious by the consideration that the human race would not have reached even approximately its present ethical level but for a widespread belief in the resurrection of Christ, which belief can only be accounted for by supposing that either the alleged miracle actually took place, or else that events have been providentially so ordered as to necessitate an erroneous conviction that it did occur. The latter alternative, however, is not only objectionable in itself, but it is opposed to a body of evidence in behalf of the resurrection which, as the assumed improbability of miracles has now been more than neutralized, meets all the requirements of an historical demonstration.

6. The testimony of the witnesses to the resurrection is not invalidated or rendered at all questionable by any discrepancies to be found in it, because these are only normal in quantity and difficulty, and do not exceed, if they equal, in these respects those occurring in other testimony on the strength of which other facts are unquestioningly believed.

7. If it may be reasonably presumed that God has wrought miracles, it must seem more than probable that he has provided a means by which his purpose in so doing can be made intelligible to those for whose spiritual welfare these exceptional events were brought about. And since it is his uniform custom to convey instruction to the human race through the medium of individuals belonging

to it, we may fairly suppose that he would see to it that there should be some who would faithfully record and expound the teachings which the miracles were designed to enforce. As the Hebrew race is recognized as having evinced the deepest spiritual knowledge which mankind has ever achieved, we may rationally expect to find in its highest utterances — which are to be looked for especially in the New Testament — the key to the teachings referred to. And as a revelation necessarily implies an ability on the part of mankind to understand it, we shall be convinced that the interpretation of those teachings which has been generally held from the beginning is substantially correct.

8. The New Testament standard of ethics which we thus constrain ourselves to approve is in harmony with that which, as previously shown, is taught by natural religion ; and we have thus a twofold reason for regarding it as divinely revealed. It is so high, however, that it would seem impracticable, and therefore prove discouraging to most men, if it were not supplemented by stimulating facts which would enable them to regard it as within their reach. When, therefore, we find such facts affirmed in connection with it by writers whom we are already prepared to regard to some extent as the mouthpieces of God, we are justified in accepting these facts, not only on that account, but also because if it is rational for us to believe that the moral teachings of the gospel are in any sense revealed by God, it is irrational for us not to believe

that those doctrines are equally divine without which Christian ethics would secure little or no practical hold on men.

9. Under the general head of the dogmatic teachings which we are thus prepared to accept is the doctrine that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, which is not only clearly taught in the New Testament, but also derives additional sanction from the facts that without it God could not have adequately revealed, so far as we can see, the spirit of self-sacrificing love which underlies his character, and the world would have been obliged to do without the ethical inspiration which it has obtained from its grandest belief.

10. Under the same general head is included the doctrine of the Atonement, which is not only plainly taught by the men from whom we have obtained our highest conceptions of moral obligation, but is rendered practically inseparable from these by the fact that, whether or not sin creates any objective barrier between man and God, there is almost sure to be one of a subjective nature in the tendency of remorse to magnify the difficulty of obtaining divine pardon, a tendency which is liable to discourage those who would otherwise be moved to acquire a spiritual character.

11. To the same class of teachings belongs the doctrine of Justification by Faith, which is indispensable to a perfect moral code, because without it there is in the way of every man who has broken the moral law a psychological obstacle which is

well-nigh certain to impart a selfish cast even to his efforts to serve God.

12. And the same doctrine receives a new accession of credibility from the fact that it conditions spiritual success on the cultivation of the same valuable qualities without which no success in secular life is attainable.

13. As the love which the gospel teaches is a comprehensive principle of action from the benefits of which no human being whom it is possible to help may be rightfully excluded, the surest proof that one has enlarged his nature to the magnitude of that spirit is found in a missionary zeal which extends the right hand of a practical Christian fellowship to the spiritually and temporally needy in all parts of the earth and in all divisions of the human family.

The considerations adduced in the foregoing pages would seem to make it clear that the acceptance of what is commonly known as evangelical Christianity involves no leap into the unknown that can be regarded as unreasonably taxing the mental and moral powers of any man. On the contrary, the evidence that can be urged in support of the various dogmas and beliefs which have been examined, and of others besides, is far stronger than that on which many a scientific hypothesis is founded at the outset; and no one can be properly accused of breaking with the spirit of a scientific age who adopts them with the expectation that

they will be verified by a lifelong induction of his spiritual experiences. Any just criticisms that can be made in this connection must be directed against him who pursues a different course. Science cannot be admitted to have an ethical right to approach all propositions, whatever they may be, in a spirit of absolute indifference as to whether they shall prove true or false. Although such a spirit may be useful and commendable when dealing with theories which aim only at satisfying the curiosity of men, it becomes ethically unsound when it is cherished towards efforts made for the amelioration of human suffering. If an unknown pestilence is decimating a community, it must be treated empirically or not at all; for science does not as yet know the proper remedies. The physician who should be utterly indifferent towards such as might be suggested, who should not entertain a desire that they might prove efficacious, who should not manifest that desire by giving them the first place in his laboratory experiments, would outrage the moral sense of the whole community.

Christianity seeks to cure the moral ailments of an unhappy world. It aims to meet the immediate spiritual needs of men. Science cannot do so, for she works for the species, not for the individual. Her discoveries may be expected to benefit the human race, but the generation in which she begins a particular line of investigation may not profit by the results. "Art is long, and time is fleeting." Even if she shall eventually demonstrate that

every essential doctrine of the Christian religion is true, those now living can reap no benefit from the fact. The fears, heartaches, sins, and selfishness which are now in the world need help. Christianity promises its aid at once and knowledge afterwards. The light that is needed for instant use it accords to faith ; the scientific proof which the intellect craves it engages to provide through the medium of a later personal experience. Under these circumstances, ought it to be halted at the barred gates of this moral infirmity which we call the earth and dance attendance there until suspicious porters have cross-examined it to their satisfaction through the wicket, or ought it to find all doors open and servants in waiting who will eagerly guide it to the bedside of the sick? In a word, should it encounter in scientific men a friendly welcome and a philanthropic willingness to give it a trial, or only a skeptical distrust which will have no concern save to pick flaws in its letters of introduction?

These questions would hardly seem to need an answer. Science does not outrank benevolence. Any scientific canons which would relieve a man from the obligation to give the most pressing needs of his fellow men the right of way in his search for truth are ethically false. The man of science should be first of all a Christian, in order that, while he is pursuing his investigations in his chosen fields of secular study, he may at the same time be testing by the experiences of a spiritual

life the sublime religious propositions by which the gospel would uplift humanity. He cannot be true at once to the scientific spirit and to the dictates of an enlightened moral sense unless he carries his scientific methods first of all into the field of experimental religion, and so finds out for himself how much of truth there is in the utterances of those consecrated souls who claim to have found God and eternal truth by following the counsels of Jesus Christ. "Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things?" is a reproach which is incurred by every one who has become an authority in any department of secular knowledge while neglecting to explore the infinitely more important field of spiritual truth.

It would follow, then, that no man is justified in taking refuge in agnosticism to escape from the urgent demands of Christianity for religious action. He may rightfully remain an agnostic in reference to matters which he can properly excuse himself from investigating; but if his use of the term implies that he is warranted in refusing to make a personal test of the most momentous subject that can engage human attention and in continuing willfully ignorant of facts which are vital to the highest interests of the human race, he has taken a position which is capable of neither rational nor ethical defense. Every Christian at the beginning of his religious career is an agnostic in the strict meaning of the word, for he has had no scientific demonstration of the truth of what he believes;

but he becomes worthy of the highest commendation, both from a scientific and an ethical point of view, when he refuses to recognize his agnosticism as a desirable or permanent mental condition, and devotes his life to the experimental verification of the religious teachings on which the dearest hopes of humanity depend.

In view of all the facts which have thus been presented, it would be idle to deny to orthodoxy a place among the rational beliefs of mankind, or to affirm that there is any solid ground for the prediction that it will ever be degraded from the high rank it has always occupied as the most potent of all the ethical influences that have ever been brought to bear upon the human race. So long as human nature shall continue to be what it is in the present and what it has ever been in the past, so long as it shall be conscious of its present spiritual needs and amenable to the motives by which it is now swayed, so long will the creeds of so-called evangelical Christianity be held for substance of doctrine by the great mass of the followers of Christ. Not until beliefs shall have no important influence on conduct, not until the conduct shall be ethically so high as to need the stimulus of no doctrinal beliefs, will the obvious teachings of the gospel be superfluous and outworn. Orthodoxy is built on the foundation of human wants. It has maintained its place in the world against the attacks of powerful enemies, and while hampered by the weight of many a mistaken tenet, only because

it has appealed with irresistible force to the combined spiritual, moral, and logical needs of the human race; and until these shall be done away with, its preservation is sure.

That philosophical crudities will still be filtered out of its statements of belief is to be expected. That education and reflection will broaden the original creed of individuals and promote them, as it were, grade by grade, into an ever increasing rationality of faith can be taken for granted. That denominations will always exist, and that some of these will repudiate doctrines which are deemed by others indispensable to the life of the Christian Church may be unhesitatingly predicted. No creed or dogma is of any practical value save as it furthers the moral growth of him who holds it, nor is it likely to be held with any intensity of conviction unless it has been made a factor in the life and verified by an experience of its utility. No one will be able to cherish more than a perfunctory belief in the Trinity unless he has become sensible of the need of some theological statement which shall give at least a semblance of self-consistency to the teachings of Scripture regarding the nature of Christ; nor will any one be likely to contend very strenuously for the doctrine of Justification by Faith unless, like Paul and Luther, he has learned what it is to reach the end of his spiritual resources in a fruitless attempt to live up to the requirements of his own moral law.

Denominations illustrate by their existence the

fact that all the teachings of Christianity do not appeal to all men with equal force, and the kindred fact that mankind is divided into various distinct groups by emotional, intellectual, or æsthetic peculiarities which make it desirable that even the same truths should be presented in different ways. There are some churches which could not exist at all except in an atmosphere which is already saturated with beliefs which were due, at the outset, to the influence of dogmas which these churches have rejected. There are individual Christians who have in the same way overturned the ladder by which they mounted to their present ethical level. Theological beliefs frequently become atrophied in individual experience from lack of use. They die out because the ethical ambition to which they once proved stepping-stones has come to be sufficient in itself and no longer feels the need of a special stimulus from without, because the soul which they once helped to unite with God is now conscious of divine adoption and no longer craves the aid of dogmatic encouragement. But notwithstanding all diversities of ministrations and workings, it may be confidently affirmed that the tenets of orthodoxy will still be the mainspring from which the force that is to redeem human nature will be derived.

Moreover, so long as it shall be conceded that but for a belief in the miracles of the New Testament the human race as a whole would have lacked an adequate appreciation of the self-sacrificing love

of God, the ability to realize that sin has not erected an impossible barrier between any man and his Maker, the sense of security which is indispensable to an unselfish religious service, and, in general, the ethical stimulus which has made modern civilization possible, so long will the supernaturalism of the gospel be recognized as one of its essential features and prove an inseparable adjunct of the Christian doctrines in securing a world-wide adoption of the ethics of Christ.

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